

Univerzita Hradec Králové

Pedagogická fakulta

**Bakalářská práce**

Univerzita Hradec Králové

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Katedra anglického jazyka a literatury

**Zobrazení původních obyvatel v legendě o Pocahontas a jejích adaptacích**

Bakalářská práce

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Studijní program: 7310 Filologie

Studijní obor: Cizí jazyky pro cestovní ruch – anglický jazyk

Cizí jazyky pro cestovní ruch – německý jazyk

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**Zadání bakalářské práce**

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**Název závěrečné práce:** **Zobrazení původních obyvatel v legendě o Pocahontas a jejích adaptacích**

Název závěrečné práce AJ: The Portrayal of Native Americans in Pocahontas Legend and its Adaptations

**Cíl, metody, literatura, předpoklady:**

Cílem bakalářské práce je poukázat na rozdíly mezi originálním vyprávěním a pozdějšími verzemi v širším historickém kontextu.

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## Zadání bakalářské práce

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Předkládaná bakalářská práce se zabývá zobrazením původních obyvatel Severní Ameriky v legendě o Pocahontas z počátku 17 století. Teoretická část zanalyzuje původní příběh z roku 1607 sepsaný Johnem Smithem. V praktické části práce srovná tyto získané informace s několika vybranými adaptacemi, jak literárními, tak filmovými. Cílem bakalářské práce je poukázat na rozdíly mezi originálním vyprávěním a pozdějšími verzemi v širším historickém kontextu.

Berkhofer, F. Robert. *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present*. Alfred A. Knop, 1978.

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## **Prohlášení**

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V Hradci Králové dne

.....

Kateřina Buchtová

## **Anotace**

BUCHTOVÁ, Kateřina. *Zobrazení původních obyvatel v legendě o Pocahontas a jejích adaptacích*. Hradec Králové: Pedagogická fakulta Univerzity Hradec Králové, 2021.  
Bakalářská práce

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## **Klíčová slova**

Původní obyvatelé Ameriky, stereotypy, Indiáni, Pocahontas

## **Annotation**

BUCHTOVÁ, Kateřina. *The Portrayal of Native Americans in Pocahontas Legend and its Adaptations*. Hradec Králové: Faculty of Education at University of Hradec Králové, 2021. Bachelor Thesis

This bachelor thesis deals with the topic of the portrayal of North American native people in the legend of Pocahontas at the beginning of 17<sup>th</sup> century. Theoretical part analyses the original story from 1607 written by John Smith. Practical part then compares the information with several chosen adaptations, both literature and film version. The goal of this thesis is to show the differences between the original and later stories in broader historical context.

## **Key words**

Native Americans, stereotypes, American Indians, Pocahontas

## ***Abstrakt***

Původní obyvatelé Severní Ameriky je označení pro domorodé Američany obývající dnešní území Severní Ameriky. Jen na území Spojených států se vyskytuje kolem 562 kmenů uznaných americkou vládou. Zatímco 229 z nich sídlí ve státu Aljaška, zbytek obývá dalších 33 států.

Předci současných Indiánů přišli do dnešní Ameriky z Asie. Následně se vyvinula řada různých národů, kmenů a kultur. Každý kmen má svou vlastní řeč, zvyky a tradice. Výrazně je však ovlivnila evropská kolonizace, započatá roku 1492 Krištofem Kolumbem. Jejich počty začaly rapidně klesat až o 90 %, kvůli nemocem, které k nim zavlekli osadníci, nebo kvůli válkám.

Po založení Spojených států nedošlo k mnoha změnám a Indiáni stále byli vystavováni válkám, odsunům z původních území či jednostranným smlouvám. V roce 1830 byl Americkým kongresem schválen Indian Removal Act, který právě nařizoval odsun všech Indiánů za řeku Mississippi. V roce 1924 bylo všem americkým původním obyvatelům uděleno státní občanství a povolení volit. I přesto však existují státy, které tyto práva odmítaly z přesvědčení, že Indiáni nejsou občany USA.

V kinematografii se severoameričtí původní obyvatelé objevovali od úplného počátku. Hned od začátku se však Indiáni museli potýkat se zkreslováním svého zobrazení. Často byli znázorněni jako primitivní postavy, jedoucí mlčky na koni nebo jako prostředek k tomu, aby běloši vyšli z příběhu jako hrdinové a ukázali své zabijácké schopnosti. I přesto, že jejich životy prošly změnami, byli stále společností vnímáni jako divoši z minulých století. Kromě toho je ve většině filmů hráli herci, kteří mezi tyto původní obyvatele Ameriky rozhodně nepatřili.

Cílem této bakalářské práce je představit čtenáři stereotypní zobrazení Severoamerických původních obyvatel, legendu o Pocahontas a poukázat na některé tyto stereotypy ve vybraných filmech.

Teoretická část se zabývá stereotypy jakožto obecně jednotvárného, ustáleného vnímání věci či člověka a nadále pak nastíní stereotypy týkající se přímo Severoamerických původních obyvatel. Kromě všeobecného popisu se první kapitola teoretické části věnuje i detailnějšímu



rozboru několika vybraných stereotypů jako je zobrazení indiánů jako krvežíznivý a ušlechtilý divoch, šaman nebo jejich problémy s alkoholismem, skrz které jsou pak v praktické části analyzovány zvolené filmové adaptace.

Druhá kapitola se zaobírá původní legendou o Pocahontas. Nejprve je však povrchově probrané společensko-historické pozadí od prvních počátků kolonialismu až po vylodění ve Virginii. Poté bude postupně rozebrána postava Johna Smithe a jak vnímal domorodé obyvatel Severní Ameriky po vylodění na břehu Virginie na počátku 17.století. Jako poslední se teoretická část věnuje stručně legendě o Pocahontas.

Dále následuje praktická část s pěti většími kapitolami. Každá z nich se zabývá jednou filmovou adaptací určených k analýze. Jedna podruhé rozebírají *Zlomený šíp (Broken Arrow)*, *Tanec s vlky (Dances With Wolves)*, *Pocahontas (Pocahontas)*, *Kouřové signály (Smoke Signals)* a *Nový svět (The New World)*. Tyto konkrétní tituly byly vybrány tak, aby reprezentovaly různé druhy filmů. *Zlomený šíp* a *Tanec s vlky* jsou oba westernové filmové adaptace, které zobrazují Indiány jinak než jen ty typické divochy, kteří mají v oblibě zabíjení příslušníků bílé rasy. *Pocahontas* je prvním filmem, kdy Disney představil princeznu se snědším typem kůže, než bylo doposud typické. Tato animovaná pohádka představuje převyprávěnou legendu o Pocahontas. Stejně tak se i *Nový svět* zabývá tímto příběhem. Zároveň je film Terrence Malicka i verzí, která se původní pověsti podobá více než ta z dílny Walta Disneyho. Posledním titulem jsou pak *Kouřové signály*, které jsou nezávislým filmem režírovaným Chrisem Eyrem, který sám pochází z kmenů Cheyenne a Arapaho. Tento snímek se tak zabývá realitou indiánských rezervací v 90.letech minulého století a problémy, se kterými v dnešní době Indiáni bojují.

Jednotlivé filmové kapitoly se skládají z krátkého odstavce obsahující informace o filmu, stručného popisu děje konkrétního titulu, ve kterém se pak nachází rozbor z hlediska stereotypů 1) Krvežíznivý válečník (The Savage Warrior), 2) Ušlechtilý Indián (The Noble Indian), 3) Šaman (The Wise Man), 4) Ženské stereotypy (The Woman Stereotype), 5) Alkoholismus (Alcoholism) a 6) Móda (Fashion). Všechny zmíněné jsou popsány a detailněji rozebrány v teoretické části práce.

U žádného z vybraných snímků však nejsou tyto kategorie kompletně zastoupeny. *Pocahontas* je příběh, jehož cílenými diváky jsou převážně děti, neobsahuje tak žádnou zmínku

o alkoholismu. Ten bychom nenašli ani v ostatních filmech kromě *Kouřových Signálů*. V *Novém Světě* zase nezpozorujeme nikoho, kdo by zobrazoval stereotyp šamana, stejně tak jako bychom ho těžko hledali ve filmu *Zlomený šíp*.

Stereotyp krvežíznivého válečníka a móda jsou jediné, které jsou přítomné ve všech rozebíraných filmech. Co se týče protějšího zobrazení Indiánů jakožto těch ušlechtilých, jsou stejně jako jeho negativní portrét výrazně ve všech vybraných dílech.

Bakalářská práce ukazuje, že i přesto, že se filmový průmysl od svého začátku rozvinul, zobrazení indiánů je stále převážně stejné a stereotypy se jich stále drží. Také legenda o Pocahontas je v kinematografii pořád upravována, aby dosáhla nejvíce publika. I když se film originálnímu příběhu většinou podobá, nikdy však není legenda představena podle skutečnosti.

## Contents

Introduction .....	12
1. Stereotypes .....	13
1.1 Stereotypes in general.....	13
1.2 Native Americans and stereotypes .....	14
1.2.1 The Savage Warrior.....	18
1.2.2 The Noble Indian.....	18
1.2.3 The Wise Man .....	19
1.2.4 The Woman Stereotype .....	19
1.2.5 Alcoholism .....	20
1.2.6 Fashion .....	20
2. The Legend of Pocahontas .....	22
2.1 Historical and cultural context.....	22
2.2 John Smith.....	23
2.2.1 Native Americans by John Smith.....	24
2.3 Pocahontas .....	25
3. Native Americans in cinematography .....	27
3.1 Broken Arrow – Delmer Daves, 1950.....	27
3.2 Dances With Wolves – Kevin Costner, 1990.....	31
3.3 Pocahontas – Mike Gabriel, Eric Goldberg, 1995.....	35
3.4 Smoke Signals – Chris Eyre, 1998 .....	39

3.5 The New World – Terrence Malick, 2005.....	42
4. Conclusion.....	46
5. Bibliography.....	48

## Introduction

The thesis aims to analyze how Native Americans are portrayed in movies. The main focus then will be on the legend of Pocahontas and how the stereotypes are being presented in a few selected movie adaptations.

I decided to choose this topic when I was attending the classes of North American Native Writing during my Erasmus stay in Maribor, Slovenia. The professor mentioned several times how our opinions and views about the American Indians are far from the actual truth. After a few of the classes, I was interested in finding more. As someone who enjoys watching Disney movies or movies in general, I knew I had to choose this as a bachelor thesis topic to educate myself more.

At first, I will define the word stereotype and a few examples of how certain nations are perceived. Since this thesis focuses mainly on the First Nations, the stereotypes concerning them will be described and how they are depicted in movies. Some of the main stereotypes will be described in detail.

In the next part, the attention will be aimed at the legend of Pocahontas and its historical and cultural context. A little bit of the history of colonialism will be mentioned, and then the focus will be paid on the legend and the characters of Pocahontas, John Smith, and how he described the Native Americans he encountered in his book that was later published.

In the last part of this bachelor thesis, I decided to analyze a few movies and show the stereotypes described in the abstract part. I choose Disney's Pocahontas and Terrence Malick's The New World. Both films focus on the 17th-century legend about the meeting between the English settlers and the Native American girl. However, there are a few differences between them.

Furthermore, I choose Delmer Daves' Broken Arrow and Kevin Costner's Dances with Wolves as both movies show Indians in a different way than bloodthirsty savages. Lastly, I picked Chris Eyre's Smoke Signals because it is a movie directed by a Native American and shows the problems of today's Indians.

# 1. Stereotypes

In the first chapter of this bachelor thesis, I will concentrate on stereotypes in general, the definition of the term that can be found in a dictionary, and what it might imply. Furthermore, I will study the stereotypes connected specifically to the Native Americans and describe a few of these in detail.

## 1.1 Stereotypes in general

This thesis focuses on stereotypical portrayals of Native American individuals or communities in general and movies. First, it is necessary to define what stereotypes are to understand them better. Oxford Dictionary would describe the term as "a fixed idea or image that many people have of a particular type of person or thing, but which is often not true in reality."<sup>1</sup> The Oxford Dictionary's description implies that a stereotype is something people assume about a certain group of people based on what they have heard or read. What is mostly mentioned is that particular group's behavior, appearance, or personal traits.

For example, a typical stereotype about Britts would be that they are very cold and conservative. Even though it might be true for some individuals within this nation, it is not fair to generalize its people. These cold and conservative human beings exist worldwide. Another great example is the Dutch nation. Stereotypically portrayed as farmers, who live in windmills, wear clogs, have a garden full of tulips, and sit on piles of yellow cheese. On the other hand, Germans have no sense of humor; they drink beer all day, eat vast quantities of sausage and sauerkraut, and follow the rules blindly.<sup>2</sup> To someone, it may bring a smile to their faces, but to someone else, it might be rather rude to assume such things are true. There is always so much more to everyone than the stereotypes.

In his book *Public Opinion*, Walter Lippmann elaborates on the definition of stereotypes and how they influence individual behavior. The main idea is that people tend not to question their opinions about certain things even though they may have never experienced them.

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<sup>1</sup> „Stereotype“. Oxford Dictionary [online]. [retrieved 2021-01-15]. Available at: [https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/stereotype\\_1?q=stereotype](https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/stereotype_1?q=stereotype)

<sup>2</sup> *55 National Stereotypes that will Ruin or Make your Day* [online]. 2013 [retrieved 2021-01-15]. Available at: <https://www.nationalstereotype.com/55-nations-stereotypes-that-will-ruin-or-make-your-day/>

Regarding the Native Americans, many people have never in their life encountered one. Still, they see them in a way that has been implanted in their mind by the society that we live in:

For the most part we do not first see, and then define, we define first and then see. In the great blooming, buzzing confusion of the outer world we pick out what our culture has already defined for us, and we tend to perceive that which we have picked out in the form stereotyped for us by our culture.<sup>3</sup>

Hence there is no need to know someone personally or meet them to create an image of someone. All that is necessary is an opinion that is widely known in society rather than facts.

Virginia McLaurin claims that stereotypes have been described in various ways throughout the years. However, one might question those definitions as not all stereotypes are racial. Some affect older people, homosexuals, different religions, or even women and men.<sup>4</sup> Everybody is different, and saying that people from the same age, race, and religious groups are all the same takes their individuality and diversity away.

## 1.2 Native Americans and stereotypes

One of the oldest stereotypes concerning the Natives is the belief that the whole of North America consists of only one culture, one language, or one way of life. During the colonization, the different cultures meant nothing to the Europeans, as their goal was to conquer the land. Suddenly, certain symbols or images were seen as one culture, one tribe composed of identical people.

There are around 562 Indian tribes that the American government recognizes. While 229 are settled in Alaska, the rest is based in 33 other states. Even though each of those tribes

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<sup>3</sup> LIPPMANN, Walter. *Public Opinion*. p.55

<sup>4</sup> MCLAURIN, Virginia A. *Stereotypes of Contemporary Native American Indian Characters in Recent Popular Media*. 2012, p.2

as different traditions and histories, they are regularly generalized and forgotten by the film culture.<sup>5</sup>

Most of the knowledge people have about Native Americans is from myths, stereotypes, and half-truths portrayed in movies, television, and media. The consequences of the movie representations are often expectations the public has about behaviour or look of American Indians. It often results in the inability to recognize a real Native American because their way of dressing and behaving is the same as ours.<sup>6</sup>

Negative stereotypes can often be associated with racism. However, their use can be applied within the same race, ethnicity, or nation as well. Therefore, the problem is that a class feels more dominant over the other. With stereotyping also comes dehumanizing. In other words, denying people their humaneness by calling them "evil," thus justifying any attacks or actions taken against those people as we can see in this example:

If we call someone "evil," we mean that we are the good people. And if we are good and they are evil, then we are not only off the hook for negotiating with them, but it becomes our "moral" duty to exorcise them, to exterminate them, and make the world a safe place.<sup>7</sup>

Another ideology often associated with Native Americans is linked to the term "savage." This example provided by the authors of *The Story of Pocahontas* outlines the philosophy behind the word:

Because the English (settlers of Jamestown) considered the Powhatan people savages, they considered it okay to kill them and take their land. There has to be some kind of conviction – people do not just kill other people without some kind of justification for

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<sup>5</sup> BOYD, Julia. *An Examination of Native Americans in Film and Rise of Native Filmmakers*. 2015, p. 106

<sup>6</sup> JAŠKOVÁ, Bibiana. *Portrayal of Native Americans in Selected Advertisements*. 2019, p.26

<sup>7</sup> FITZGERALD, Michael Ray. *Native Americans on Network TV: Stereotypes, Myths, and the "Good Indian"*. 2013, p.22



their consciences unless they are simply murderers. The term "savage" and its associated ideology is what the English colonizers used to justify and rationalize their actions.<sup>8</sup>

However, the stereotypes connected with Native Americans are not only negative but also some positives. They depict them as people living close to nature and suffering when they encounter environmental problems. Although these stereotypes are not supposed to be offensive or mock the nation, they portray them as something amusing or interesting to observe.<sup>9</sup>

Another type of racism is Benevolent racism. It believes that the subject group is in need of being protected. They are mostly portrayed as victims of a third aggressive group they need to be rescued from. This "protection" often becomes a military occupation or even genocidal policy against the group that is being saved. In the United States, there is an idea that euphemizing those genocidal policies may function as protection for those groups. This ethnic-cleansing project called Indian Removal originated during the administration of Andrew Jackson, the seventh president of the United States.<sup>10</sup> This act granted the president the rights to give the Indian tribes land in the western prairies in exchange for their territories within the state borders, from which they would be removed.<sup>11</sup>

For years, even before motion pictures were invented, American Indians were portrayed in hundreds of traditional western stories as savage, ruthless, merciless, fanatic, or plagues of vermin. The plot was always centered on white people being slaughtered by Indians and eventually saved by a white hero. Because the Natives were often portrayed as these primitive characters riding on horseback, usually silent except for a few unintelligible grunts or war cries, they were a means for white people to come out of the story as the heroes and show their killing skills.

Indians have for a long time been represented unfavorably by the American film industry. Similar to the colonist forcing Native Americans off their land, filmmakers often cast

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 23

<sup>9</sup> JAŠKOVÁ, Bibiana. *Portrayal of Native Americans in Selected Advertisements*. 2019, p.27

<sup>10</sup> FITZGERALD, Michael Ray. *Native Americans on Network TV: Stereotypes, Myths, and the "Good Indian"*. 2013, p.24

<sup>11</sup> See Indian Removal Act. Encyclopaedia Britannica [online]. Encyclopaedia Britannica 2019 [retrieved 2021-03-15]. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Indian-Removal-Act>

them as minor characters displaying stereotypical and inaccurate behavior. Even though the film industry has progressed over the years, the portrayal of Native people has not changed. Played mostly by non-native actors, dressed in a vest or shirt, breechclout, fringed pants, moccasins with a wig, war bonnet or headband on, and a few streaks of paint, they have embedded themselves into people's minds as a representation of a true Native identity.<sup>12</sup>

According to Kiyawasew, stereotypes of Native Americans in film can be divided into three categories, specifically then mental, sexual, and spiritual. Mental stereotypes show them as being less mentally developed than non-natives and therefore needing help or being shown the right way. When it comes to sexuality, Indian men are often seen to be longing for white women. As for Native females, they are portrayed as these Indian Princesses and objects of sexual desire. Spiritual stereotypes cover their connection to nature and to the earth. <sup>13</sup>

What European men misunderstood was female expertise in diplomacy. From an outsider's side, the female cooperation was interpreted as a sign of their attraction to European men and culture. However, some women within the communities were deployed as female intermediaries. They acted as translators, mediators, and advisers while building productive relationships with newcomers.<sup>14</sup>

After James Fenimore Cooper published a series of stories called *The Leatherstocking Tales*, he was considered to be the main creator of the two traditional stereotypical portraits of Indians in the film: the Noble Indian and the Savage Warrior.<sup>15</sup> These could be translated as the one who cooperates with white people while the other type fights against them and is then considered to be "savage."

Even though the stereotypes of noble and bloodthirsty savage may be seen as outdated, it is still very much present. Not only was James Fenimore Cooper the author of the series *The Leatherstocking Tales*, but he also wrote *The Last of the Mohicans*, which was made into a popular movie in 1992. Despite the nineties being considered as a time of 'heightened sensitivity

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<sup>12</sup> KIYAWASEW, Kimberley. *The Perpetuation of Native Stereotypes in Film*. 2014, p.5

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p.7

<sup>14</sup> JAGER, Rebecca K. *Malinche, Pocahontas, and Sacagawea: Indian women as cultural intermediaries and national symbols*. 2015, p.5

<sup>15</sup> BOYD, Julia. *An Examination of Native Americans in Film and Rise of Native Filmmakers*. 2015, p.106

regarding race, the typical depiction could still be seen in the movie.<sup>16</sup> Although they may be the main depictions, they are not the only stereotypes that are connected to the American Indians.

### 1.2.1 The Savage Warrior

The Bloodthirsty Savages were the most typical portrayal of Natives in film and at the same time the most damaging. The history of the stereotype is linked to settler colonialism when the Europeans displayed Natives as "uncivilized" and "needing saving" to explain why the American Indians were treated the way they were. From old Westerns' portrayal as ignorant, savage, and murderous to ignoring the Indigenous culture and points of view in news stories. There is a long history of abuse behind the name that must be recognized.<sup>17</sup>

The savage warrior was most often depicted wielding tomahawks eager to shed the blood of white men and the purity of white women. Even though many tribes did not take part in conflict, especially amongst themselves, they were seen as a threat to civilized society.<sup>18</sup>

The historical figure of Geronimo in the film of the same name is an example of an ignoble Indian. He refuses to submit to the reservation system. Because of that he is seen as ruthless and willing to kill non-native people to stay outside of it.<sup>19</sup>

### 1.2.2 The Noble Indian

Until about 1948, the dominant image was one of ignoble Indians. After the horrors of World War II, the United States could not be seen as a nation, which supported the repression toward non-white people. However, the Hollywood movies celebrating the violent victory of the West over American Indians presented proof that America had participated and celebrated its own genocidal practices.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p.107

<sup>17</sup> JAŠKOVÁ, Bibiana. *Portrayal of Native Americans in Selected Advertisements*. 2019, p.35

<sup>18</sup> MONITZ, Ariel. *Being Native American in a Stereotypical and Appropriated North America*. 2016 p. 42

<sup>19</sup> JAŠKOVÁ, Bibiana. *Portrayal of Native Americans in Selected Advertisements*. 2019, p.35

<sup>20</sup> FITZGERALD, Michael Ray. *Native Americans on Network TV: Stereotypes, Myths, and the "Good Indian"*. 2013, p.25

The image of a noble savage was a romanticized idea of a brave, modest, and calm person. They are depicted as characters stuck in the past, never catching up to the present time. They are often in touch with nature and play a sidekick to the white hero. The character of Kicking Bird in *Dances with Wolves* is an example of a noble savage, therefore friend to the main character.<sup>21</sup>

### 1.2.3 The Wise Man

This stereotype is one of the "positive" ones. Some tribes had an individual who knew herbs, cures, and ancient healing methods. They were often called as "shamans". However, this term has its origins in European concepts and does not exist in any Native American culture. In movies, these characters often guide white protagonists, essentially making them positive roles.<sup>22</sup>

The character of the wise elder is a mysterious, all-knowing man who is often isolated from his tribe. Another thing they are good at is trying to assist the White heroes in their quest for something.<sup>23</sup>

### 1.2.4 The Woman Stereotype

It is not only a male Native American who experiences stereotyping as women are divided into two groups. The first one is the Indian princess, which is an alternative to the stereotype of the noble savage. It represents a beautiful, young female. She was often portrayed as a mother who cared for her family. These images were meant to show to Euro-American women that the traditional role of a woman was also present in these less civilized communities.

On the other hand, there were Native females described as wild, uncivilized, immoral, and inferior to the white people. They were called "squaws". These women mostly worked hard, even begged. They represented the hardships connected to poverty and the low standards that the native communities went through.

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<sup>21</sup> KIYAWASEW, Kimberley. *The Perpetuation of Native Stereotypes in Film*. 2014, p.8

<sup>22</sup> MONITZ, Ariel. *Being Native American in a Stereotypical and Appropriated North America*. 2016 p. 42

<sup>23</sup> BIRD, S. Elizabeth. Gendered Construction of the American Indian in Popular Media. *Journal of Communication*. 1999, p.71

Compared with the images of Native males, who were portrayed as aggressive savages or unable of normal life, the depiction of Native American women was still relatively positive.  
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### 1.2.5 Alcoholism

Another most popular stereotype portrays the Native Americans as alcoholics. The idea came from history when the colonizers used alcohol as a leverage tool or an instrument of trade. While the settlers were no strangers to extreme drinking, they were the perfect examples from which the First Nations could learn.

Nowadays, alcoholism is associated with those at an economic disadvantage and with discrimination of races. According to a study from the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, it is still a white male who is more predisposed to drinking alcohol daily and driving under the influence.<sup>25</sup>

### 1.2.6 Fashion

The Euro-American people have extensively used the culture, the costumes, and sacred objects since the first meeting. It has been inspiring designers and brands for years. Nonetheless, the final product creates an incorrect image. It thus contributes to stereotypical viewing of these people. However, the big corporations are gaining money from something that mainly does not belong to them while also managing to disrespect the significance of that particular item. One commonly used attribute is the feather headdress, which can nowadays be seen as an accessory complementing the outfit. However, the headdress is sacred to the tribes and only intended for men. It is something that cannot be bought. It brings honor and respect to those who wear it. It shows the significant deeds that the man wearing a headdress did<sup>26</sup>.

As the First Nations lived in balance with nature, they often used what 'Mother Earth' offered them. The most used materials were animal skin. The Sioux Indians often made clothes

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<sup>24</sup> JAŠKOVÁ, Bibiana. *Portrayal of Native Americans in Selected Advertisements*. 2019, p.36

<sup>25</sup> MONITZ, Ariel. *Being Native American in a Stereotypical and Appropriated North America*. 2016 p. 44

<sup>26</sup> JAŠKOVÁ, Bibiana. *Portrayal of Native Americans in Selected Advertisements*. 2019, p.23

from buffalo skin. It was decorated with beads, feathers, or horsehair. It protected them from cold weather and showed the sex, social status, or occupation of the American Indian.

On summer days, men usually had their chests exposed, and on cold days they wore a shirt which was also worn into battles or on special occasions. Women, on the other hand, had much simpler clothing. Typically, it was a one-piece dress with fringes and decorated with a belt.<sup>27</sup>

As described in this whole first chapter, stereotypes do not concern only races as one can have a fixed opinion about older people or religion. They mainly originate from our society or other people, and it is tough to change them. The typical perception of Native Americans is one of one culture and language. The negative representation hurt the nations a lot, especially the stereotype of the Savage Indian. It stripped the First Nations of their humanity and justified the actions taken against them.

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<sup>27</sup> DRASTÍKOVÁ, Michaela. *On the Authenticity of Kevin Costner's Dances with Wolves*. 2009, p. 23

## 2. The Legend of Pocahontas

The second chapter deals with the legend of Pocahontas. Because she was born around the year 1595, the narrative situates at the time of English colonialism. Thus, at first, this part focuses on the historical background. After that comes a brief biography of Captain John Smith and a description of how he viewed the American Indians he encountered. At the end of the second section, I will narrate her authentic story.

### 2.1 Historical and cultural context

The beginnings of modern colonialism date back to the fifteenth century when the Spanish and Portuguese Empires dominated the voyages of exploration. It followed soon after with the conquest of North America by the English Empire.<sup>28</sup>

After the Spanish conquistadors succeeded in colonizing parts of the New World, the English Crown attempted to venture overseas and gain an advantage over their European opponents. However, their first pursuit in the sixteenth century of colonizing what we now know as North America was one of loss.

The English monarchy granted Sir Walter Raleigh in 1584 a permission to discover the lands and territories not inhabited by any Christian people. The expedition settled on Roanoke Island on the Outer Banks of modern-day North Carolina. However, the settlement failed for many reasons.

Despite the initial failure, the following endeavors were more successful.<sup>29</sup> In 1607 the colonists were finally able to establish a settlement. Jamestown colony, located in the current state of Virginia and named after King James I, was the first successful settlement of the English Crown.

The settling was done by a private company, founded by King James I called, the Virginia Company. They were to settle anywhere between present-day North Carolina to New York state. The expedition began on Susan Constant, the Discovery, and the Godspeed ships.

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<sup>28</sup> MONTÓN, Leire San José. *Pocahontas: A Study of Disney's Approach to English Colonialism*. 2020, p.6

<sup>29</sup> LEE, Jennifer Elizabeth. *The Colony of Jamestown: Conceptions, Challenges, and Change*. 2018, p.3

The crew was supposed to be made up of not the best or brightest who would not work to save their own skins.

After docking in Virginia, they encountered the first natives, although the confrontations were not always friendly. Either their colony was attacked by surprise, or they were the ones doing the ambush. Furthermore, the nearby swamp with malaria-carrying mosquitoes and the lack of freshwater caused several problems.

## 2.2 John Smith

John Smith was born in 1580 in Lincolnshire to a farm family. He always showed an adventurous spirit. At the beginning of the 17th century, he joined the fight against the Spanish in the Netherlands in the War of Independence and later in Hungary against the Turkish Ottoman Empire. After returning to England, he was recruited by the company of king James I to go on an expedition. Because of his experience in Hungary, he knew how to deal with foreigners as both comrades and adversaries. He also learned to treat ignorance as a dangerous enemy and judge people not by their bloodline but by their effectiveness.

He documented most of his adventurous stories in *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles*. He described his experience with many passages he faced while staying in Virginia in that book.<sup>30</sup>

In 1616 he wrote a letter to Queen Ann after hearing Pocahontas with her husband John Rolfe were to visit London. He depicted her mercy and helpfulness towards the English people in Jamestown when they were starving.

“And this relief, most gracious Queen, was commonly brought us by this Lady Pocahontas...this tender virgin would still not spare to dare to visit us, and by her our jars have been oft appeased, and our wants still supplied; were it the policy of her father thus to employ her, or the ordinance of God thus to make her his instrument, or her extraordinary affection to our nation, I know not.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> MONTÓN, Leire San José. *Pocahontas: A Study of Disney's Approach to English Colonialism*. 2020, p.7

<sup>31</sup> VESELÁ, Lucie. *The story of Princess Pocahontas in English Literature*. 2008, p.30



Smith also used his status of the most famous and influential explorers to vouch for the faithfulness of Pocahontas. Thus he saw for her to be given the reception she deserved.

“Whereas finding so great a Queen should do her some honor more than she can imagine, for being so kind to your servants and subjects, would so ravish her with content, as endear her dearest blood to effect that, your Majesty and all the Kings honest subjects most earnestly desire.”<sup>32</sup>

As it has been already mentioned before, a book was published. A diary containing Smith's many adventures and the encounter with the First Nations on the land of today's Virginia.

### 2.2.1 Native Americans by John Smith

When John Smith met Powhatan and other natives, two worlds collided. There seem to be no records of the impression the white settlers made on the First Nations. However, John Smith documented his findings in his journals that were later published.

When they arrived in Virginia, they were surprised that there were much more women and children than men. During their time, they met various tribes. Generally, they were all tall with brown skin tones. They had mostly black hair, and some even had a beard that was half shaven and half long.

They used to have a similar structure to their society as the white man. Men spent their times fishing, hunting, and doing all sorts of man-like activities while women and children did the rest. For example, they made mats, baskets, pots and prepared the food.

Although the Native Americans came across as very barbarous, Smith described how good a government they had amongst them. He even claims it to be better than many places considered very civil.

Of all the Indians John Smith met, none must have been as significant as the meeting of Powhatan. His true name was Wahunsonacock, and according to John, he owned some

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem.* p. 31

territories that he inherited from his ancestors or conquered. He was a tall, well-proportioned man with grey hair that looked to be near sixty but also very able to endure any kind of hard work. He had three brothers, who would inherit his land if anything were to happen or after their death, it would come to his sisters—first the eldest and then the others.

None of them were able to read or write. However, when it came to laws, he voiced them, and they must have been obeyed. For he seems to be very tyrannous in punishing those who offend him. They esteemed their chief as a half God.<sup>33</sup>

### 2.3 Pocahontas

Pocahontas was one of the many daughters of Chief Powhatan. She was born close to 1595; thus, when the English colonizers settled in the New World, she was around ten to twelve years old.<sup>34</sup> The mother of Pocahontas was the chief's first wife, her name the same as the young girl's. Although she died while giving birth, her spirit could be found in her daughter, making Pocahontas her father's favorite child. At birth, she was given the name Matoaka, which could be translated as "flower between two streams". The origin of the name might have come from the location of the Mattaponi village being between the Mattaponi and Pamunkey Rivers, while her parents came from tribes named the same as the two rivers.<sup>35</sup>

There was a prophecy foreseeing a nation rising from the Chesapeake Bay and overcoming the empire of the Powhatan's tribe. Since the English had landed on the same place as was predicted, fear struck the native nation. Upon capturing John Smith, it was decided for him to be executed. His head was put on a stone, and before he could be assassinated, Pocahontas intervened. She got his head in her arms and laid her own upon his to save him from death for the first time.<sup>36</sup>

There is a chance that this famous rescue was a part of an adoption ritual that may have been misunderstood. Moreover, the reason behind this scene may have had come with political maneuverings and attempts to subordinate Smith rather than embracing the European culture.

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<sup>33</sup> SMITH, John. *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles* [online]. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2006 [retrieved 2021-12-06]. Available at: <https://docsouth.unc.edu/southlit/smith/smith.html>

<sup>34</sup> MONTÓN, Leire San José. *Pocahontas: A Study of Disney's Approach to English Colonialism*. 2020, p.9

<sup>35</sup> CUSTALOW, Linwood a Angela L. DANIEL. *The True Story of Pocahontas: The Other Side of History*. p. 6

<sup>36</sup> MONTÓN, Leire San José. *Pocahontas: A Study of Disney's Approach to English Colonialism*. 2020, p.9

<sup>37</sup> Yet this was not the first time Pocahontas saved Smith's life. One winter, when famine struck the English colonizers again, she warned John Smith of an attack meant to happen during the night.

Years later, when John Smith was no longer the colony's head, the English wanted to get back what was previously stolen from them. The plan was to kidnap Powhatan's dearest daughter and later negotiate to regain their goods. <sup>38</sup> However, Pocahontas did not return to her father. She converted to Christianity, took the name Rebecca, and married John Rolfe, an English tobacco planter. In 1615 Pocahontas gave birth to their son Thomas and died of tuberculosis two years later as she was about to return to Virginia. <sup>39</sup> Apart from the personal feelings of the two participants, marriage was meant as a strategy to establish peaceful relations by intermixing the Indian and white populations. It was also evidence that the colonization of the New World was successful, and the goal of converting natives into Christianity was accomplished as well. <sup>40</sup>

Everyone has at least once come across the name of Pocahontas. It was either through Disney's 1995 version of *Pocahontas* or many other literary and cinematographic adaptations made throughout the past centuries. Her story is famous, yet not everyone is aware of the historical inaccuracies all the versions contain. It was set in 1607. During that year the English reached the shores of today's Virginia and established the colony of Jamestown. It is the story of a young Native American girl who saved the life of the English explorer John Smith. Later, she married another Englishman and went to England with him. She is considered to be the first Native American to accept Christianity.

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<sup>37</sup> EDWARDS, Leigh H. The United Colors of "Pocahontas": Synthetic Miscegenation and Disney's Multiculturalism. 1999, p. 150

<sup>38</sup> MONTÓN, Leire San José. *Pocahontas: A Study of Disney's Approach to English Colonialism*. 2020, p.10

<sup>39</sup> EDWARDS, Leigh H. The United Colors of "Pocahontas": Synthetic Miscegenation and Disney's Multiculturalism. 1999, p.150

<sup>40</sup> MONTÓN, Leire San José. *Pocahontas: A Study of Disney's Approach to English Colonialism*. 2020, p.11

### 3. Native Americans in cinematography

This chapter focuses on analyzing a few chosen movies that are about American Indians. Many movies have been made throughout the years where Indian characters appear. However, I choose to introduce these five: *Broken Arrow* (1950), *Dances with Wolves* (1990), *Pocahontas* (1995), *Smoke Signals* (1998), *The New World* (2005). All the films that will be described are of American or Canadian origin. However, many movies about the First Nations were made in different countries as well, not only in Hollywood. For example, there is a famous series of films about Vinnnetou produced in Germany.

#### 3.1 Broken Arrow – Delmer Daves, 1950

*Broken Arrow* is an American Western film directed by Delmer Daves, released in 1950, starring James Stewart, Jeff Chandler, and Debra Paget. The movie is about a friendship between a white man Tom Jeffords and Cochise, chief of the Chiricahua Apaches. A friendship that eventually led to a peace treaty as the whites and Apaches had been fighting each other for ten years.

The movie starts as the main character Tom Jeffords encounters a young Apache boy struggling because he has been wounded. He gives him some water and nurses him to health. When the boy is healed, he tells Tom that he must return home because his mother is crying for him by now. Tom is surprised: "Only it never struck me that an Apache woman would cry over her son like any other woman. Apaches are wild animals."<sup>41</sup> He always thought the Native Americans to be inhuman and emotionless. As if they had no emotions, all they ever enjoyed was killing and scalping white men or stealing.

The young boy is very grateful for Jeffords' kindness and convinces the coming Indians not to hurt Tom as he is his friend and saves him from death. The Apaches question these unusual actions but let him go this time.

Nevertheless, when spying on a group of white men, they tie him up to a tree and make him watch the deaths of those white men. When Jeffords returns to Tuscon, he meets Colonel

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<sup>41</sup> *Zlomený šíp* [Broken Arrow] [film]. Režie Delmer DAVES, USA, 1950

Bernall. They argue about the encounter with the Apaches as one of the men attacked managed to escape and now told an exaggerated version of the story.

Since meeting the Apache boy, Tom no longer believes that the American Indians are inhuman savages and decides he wants to get a meeting with Cochise to arrange a safe journey for the men carrying mail. However, what he needs to do first is improve his Chiricahua Apache language skills and learn their customs.

When he arrives at Cochise's camp, instead of meeting someone who looks like a Savage ready to kill any white man, he encounters the other stereotypical portrayal of a Native American, the Noble Indian. Cochise is the epitome of the calm, brave, and all-knowing Indian. He is willing to let go of the conflict and live in peace with the white man.

Most of the time, all the American Indians wear leather or other skinned clothing. Some have colorful shirts, and some are shirtless instead. Beaded and painted headbands can also be seen being worn by all the Apaches.

During the night, the two of them watch a ritual dance. Men in headdresses sing and dance around a fire while young women dance in a group. Further away from the fire, they come upon a young woman, called Sonseeahray, in a decorated costume with a headdress seated inside a wikiup. Jeffords is completely taken with her.

This is another stereotype that appears in many western movies. There often seems to be these kinds of relationships when a white hero falls in love with a Native American woman, who is mostly depicted as the young and beautiful Indian princess. They represent something exotic to them, something that makes them change their mind about the American Indians and become one of them.

Soonseeahray is the epitome of the Indian princess that is young, naïve, and beautiful. She takes care of her family. A family that Tom becomes a part of near the end of the movie. Before their wedding, she has to build a wikiup to spend their honeymoon in. All the wikiups were made out of straw by the women of the tribe.

Tom's meeting with Cochise was a success as he decided to allow the mail to go through. When Jeffords comes back in town, the whites are doubting the peace. However, the volunteer, who decided to deliver the mail, makes four safe rides. At the same time as the Apaches watch, there is a wagon train crossing the territory. However, the white man riding the train are not as fortunate.

The town's men are angry about Cochise's attack and accuse Jeffords of tipping the Apaches off. A fight starts between them, and when Tom is almost hanged, General Howard intervenes. He wants Jeffords, who is skeptical, to make a treaty with Cochise and the tribe.

When he arrives at the camp, he finds out that the tribe's chief is away for a few days. During this time, Jeffords and Sonseeahray meet secretly. They fall more deeply for each other, but someone else has chosen the woman. Their secret is shortly discovered by Cochise himself, who is angry. Jeffords tells him he wants to marry Sonseeahray. He will do anything the Apache customs require.

Cochise's next words clearly show the opinion about the Native Americans the white people had. "And you, Sonseeahray, they will look at you as at a strange animal and make jokes." <sup>42</sup> For them, they were different—someone who could never be looked at as being human as well to be equal.

The decision about peace was made, but it will not be Cochise's alone. The other Apache leaders had to agree too. Almost all approve of a trial period except for Geronimo when there is a time to vote. He refuses to be at peace with a white man. He leads a group of others who does not agree away. Not approving of the deal, Geronimo is shown as the bad Indian of the movie. Someone who could be described as the Savage Indian as all he wants to do is kill all non-native people and refuses the idea of peace. The character is the only major one whom a Native American actor plays: Jay Silverheels.

While Cochise is spending time with Jeffords, a young white boy shows up claiming Apaches stole his things. He leads them to the place where it was supposed to happen, but it is an ambush. Jeffords is shot, and his wife Sonseeahray is killed. Tom is devastated and wants

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<sup>42</sup> *Zlomený šíp* [Broken Arrow] [film]. Režie Delmer DAVES, USA, 1950

revenge on the white men. Geronimo was not the only one who disagreed with the peace between the two cultures. The euro-americans viewed the Apaches as savages that had to be killed. Since no one else was eager to kill the Apaches anymore, they wanted to take the matter into their own hands.

While this is an old western movie depicting the life of the Apache tribe during the 19th century, there seem to be no mentions of heavy alcoholism. Moreover, the stereotype of a wise man is not present in the movie either.

*Broken Arrow* could be considered a movie that does not depict the Native Americans as the bad, malicious, and only good for killing while the white man is usually the good hero. However, it does have its flaws. Native Americans speaking English could be one of them. They are usually dehumanized and portrayed as nothing positive, making them speak English instead of their mother tongue seems to belittle their identity. Furthermore, throughout the whole movie, only a few, if not one, of the character of a Native American is played by an actual American Indian. The whole cast consists of white actors.

### 3.2 Dances With Wolves – Kevin Costner, 1990

*Dances with Wolves*, directed by Kevin Costner, is a movie based on the original fictional novel written by Michael Blake. In 2007 the movie was selected for the National Film Registry for showing more sympathetic portraits of the Native American life while introducing the people to Lakota Sioux folklore, traditions, and language. <sup>43</sup>(National Film Registry).

What Costner's film does, is represents the Native Americans as being the good guys rather than the bad guys, as they were often portrayed before. Moreover, the cast of the movie consists of many Native American actors playing the leading and secondary roles, such as Graham Greene, Rodney A. Grant, and Floyd Westerman.

The film takes place during the American Civil War and tells a story about a Union Army lieutenant John J. Dunbar, who is looking for a military post at the American frontier after being injured on the battlefield and almost losing a leg.

John is being taken to Fort Sedgwick by Timmons, who knows the way. During their journey, they find a broken wagon and a skeleton pierced with an arrow. It implies that the poor dead man has been brutally killed by savage Indians, also described by Timmons as "Nothing but thieves and beggars!" <sup>44</sup> This line from the movie suggests that every Indian should be killed as if the only thing they do is plaguing the world.

While settling down at Fort Sedgwick, he finds the remains of a dead deer in the nearby river and fishes it out to burn it. The smoke attracts the attention of some hostile native warriors trying to decide if it is worth attacking. It is not visible how many soldiers could potentially be posted there. However, it is not John who, in the end, is attacked but Timmons whom the Natives saw. Eventually, he is killed by several arrows, and his scalp is taken with his wagon and horses. It again pains the First Nations as these aggressive ignoble savages, also portrayed as scalp collectors and thieves. Someone who should be killed at sight without question as they have been dehumanized and the lack of humanity is enough of a reason to get rid of them.

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<sup>43</sup> Complete National Film Registry Listing. *Library of Congress* [online]. [retrieved 2021-11-19]. Available at: <https://www.loc.gov/programs/national-film-preservation-board/film-registry/complete-national-film-registry-listing/>

<sup>44</sup> *Taneč s vlky* [Dances with wolves] [film]. Režie Kevin COSTNER, USA / Velká Británie, 1990



Another good example of a savage warrior is in the next few scenes when John, for the first time, encounters a Sioux Indian. Afterwards in the Sioux camp, his presence is discussed. An eager and young man called Wind In his Hair suggests killing John. According to him white men are bad riders and shooters. They would not survive the oncoming winter at the American frontier. However, the same Native American, called Kicking Bird, who met the white protagonist, believes it better to negotiate with him. He might have some special abilities-

In that scene, we can see the two typical portrayals of the First Nations. The bloodthirsty Indian, portrayed by Wind in his Hair, that was already mentioned and in contrast to that image, is the more reasonable Native American, represented by Kicking Bird. The wise and noble who wants to establish a friendly contact with the white man. Furthermore, Kicking Bird is also called medicine man by one of the other Sioux men, which would make him depict not only the stereotype of good Indian but also the wise man. Being the medicine man, he has a high reputation in the camp. He is peaceful and patient. His first impression of the white man was that Dunbar must be some kind of god.

Kicking Bird visits John a few times, and one time he also brings him a buffalo hide. The words that John writes in his journal in the next scene paint the Indigenous Americans as good and friendly people and show that there is always more to people than the words and stereotypes that come from other people's mouths.

"Nothing I've been told about these people is correct. They are not beggars and thieves. They are not the bogeymen they've been made out to be. On the contrary, they are polite guests and have familiar humor I enjoy." <sup>45</sup>

However, John is not the only white person who enjoys spending time with the Native Americans. A woman has been living with them since she was a child as the aggressive Pawnee tribe killed her parents. Her name is Stands with a Fist, and she was taken in by Kicking Bird and has been like a daughter to him since. She is often invited to the meetings between John and the American Indian because she still remembers a bit of English and can break the language barrier between them.

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<sup>45</sup> *Tanec s vlky* [Dances with wolves] [film]. Režie Kevin COSTNER, USA / Velká Británie, 1990

She wears a long deer dress, her hair is all messed up, and her face is dirty. Her appearance is another stereotype where Hollywood describes the Indians as dirty and having messed-up hair. Nevertheless, all the Sioux have clean faces and wear their hair in long braids or loose. Otherwise, the Indians mostly wear leather pants, shirts, and dresses. They also have a lot of jewelry and use feathers in necklaces or hairstyles.

On the other hand, the Pawnees had a different kinds of hairstyles. It demonstrates their wildness and aggression. Their heads were shaved either with or without a stripe of hair. A stripe in the middle of the head that stretched from forehead backward. Moreover, their faces were painted mainly black and red.

Throughout the next part of the movie, John becomes more than welcome in the Sioux camp. He takes part in a hunt on buffalos or the celebration and storytelling afterward by the fire. Kicking Bird even asks him to stay and protect his family when the Sioux warriors prepare to go into a war against the Pawnee tribe.

A few scenes later, the Sioux are attacked by the Pawnee. However, they are not caught defenceless as John offers them guns that he hid in Fort Sedgwick, and because of that, they can win the fight. This portrays the First Nations not in a positive light but as someone who is not capable of protecting themselves and needs the white hero to do it for them.

After deciding to move the camp elsewhere for the upcoming winter, John, dressed in Native American clothes, returns to the fort to collect his journal. However, he finds it occupied by the Union Army soldiers. As soon as they spot him, they confuse him with Indian and start shooting. This portrays another stereotype, namely, shooting the Indians at sight without hesitation, for they are no good. They capture John and question him about the tribe's whereabouts, but he refuses to say anything. While being transported to Fort Hays, he is saved by Wind in His Hair and some other Sioux warriors. In the end, John decides to leave with his wife Stands with a Fist because the Union soldiers would be looking for him, and he would bring the tribe in danger. Eventually, even the Plains Indians disappear, are caught or killed by white men.

What this movie does not mention that extensively is the woman stereotype. Since it is a Hollywood-produced movie, the element of a love relationship cannot be included. However,

in this story, the relationship is not between a white man and a Native American woman like in Broken Arrow. Even though Stands with a Fist has been living closely with the tribe from a young age, she still is of a non-native origin. However, her connection to the Sioux tribe may be the exotic trait that might have essentially drawn John in.

Moreover, what Kevin Costner's work does not cover is the issue with alcoholism. Throughout the film, the Indians are mostly shot at first sight; there is no need for alcohol to be a trading instrument to get rid of them and take over their land.

To sum it up, Costner's film portrays the history and culture quite authentically. He even included the use of a real Indian language. The Sioux language makes the film exceptional as it is not very often that someone who watches westerns comes across Indians speaking their mother tongue.

### 3.3 Pocahontas – Mike Gabriel, Eric Goldberg, 1995

In 1995 Walt Disney Pictures released a new movie titled *Pocahontas* inspired by the historical legend of the Native American girl from the 17th century. Directed by Eric Goldberg and Mike Gabriel, it is a film, where Disney for the first time in all their films, introduced a non-white princess who was not defined by a romantic relationship. Even though she falls in love with John Smith, their very short relationship does not have the typical Disney happily ever after. The reason for that may be because, in reality, Pocahontas married another English man, John Rolfe.

The story begins in England, where the English settlers prepare to sail to the New World. John Smith is first introduced as this tall, muscular, blonde man. His appearance portrays the typical white hero, who is very eager to get his hands dirty with native blood. The praises are being sung on him from the moment he appears on the screen: "You are coming on this voyage too? – Of course, he is, you can't fight Indians without John Smith" or in a later comment, "Do you think they'll give us much trouble? - Not as much trouble as Smith will give them" <sup>46</sup>

When the Powhatan tribe is introduced, one can see a similar society to our own. Even though the setting, the appearance, and clothes are different, their society is as civilized as one of the white men. Men are out hunting to provide food for their families. The women gather water or pick up other various items to take care of others. The chief Powhatan is coming back from a battle against another tribe. A war they won. This shows that clearly, many tribes battled each other, not only the colonizers, as it may be shown in different Western movies.

After the English arrive at today's Virginia, the crew begins to exploit the land and search for gold and goods that could make their dreams of being free and rich come true. On the other hand, John explores the land and, in the process, meets Pocahontas.

Her character is an idealized portrayal of the Indian princess. We see a beautiful young female with big eyes, a tiny waist, long legs, and black hair. She embodies the exotic very well,

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<sup>46</sup> *Pocahontas* [Pocahontas] [film]. Režie Mike GABRIEL, Eric GOLDBERG, USA, 1995

together with her personality, that eventually John becomes attracted to her. She represents something unknown to him.

They quickly bond, both fascinated by each other's worlds. Although the intentions behind John's fascination might be different from Pocahontas'. "We'll show your people how to use this land properly. How to make the most of it. There's so much we can teach you. We've improved the lives of savages all over the world"<sup>47</sup> he voices his opinion on seeing the First Nations as someone who is uncivilized, who has no culture and therefore has to be taught everything. There even is a song called Savages that depicts the Indians as people with red skin only good when dead. This perfectly shows an example of the term dehumanizing. That Native Americans are nothing but evil, and that is enough of a reason to attack them without justifying it.

Both protagonists spend time together and fall in love, despite both being warned against interacting with each other. During one of their meetings, they are caught by Kocoum while sharing a kiss. Since at one point in the story Pocahontas was to be married to Kocoum, the scene he sees while searching for the girl makes him furious. Therefore, he attacks and attempts to kill John.

To that point in the movie, the Native Americans were mostly shown through Pocahontas as the stereotypical portrayal of the good Indian. The brave, calm people who were living in accord with nature. On the other hand, we can see Kocoum representing the stereotype of ignoble Indian. While letting out this typical war cry, he runs at completely unarmed John wielding a tomahawk ready to kill him.

Thomas, another crew member, whom John once saved, was ordered by the Governor to spy on them. And while seeing John being in danger, he wants to return the favor and shoots and kills Kocoum. John commands Thomas to get away before the tribesman arrives and capture him. As a result of the tribe's best warrior's death, a war on the English is declared, and it starts with John's execution since he was found at the scene.

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<sup>47</sup> *Pocahontas* [Pocahontas] [film]. Režie Mike GABRIEL, Eric GOLDBERG, USA, 1995

In the morning, John is dragged by Powhatan and his tribe to a cliff. At the same time, the armed colonists are led to the same cliff. They were warned by Thomas and rallied into the battle by the eager Governor. Just as Powhatan is about to execute John, Pocahontas intervenes and finally convinces them to end their fighting. Both sides stand down, all but Governor Ratcliffe, who is led by his greed for gold. He fires his gun at Powhatan, but John takes the shot himself and is injured.

John is nursed back to health by the tribe, but he must return to England to fully heal his wounds. He asks Pocahontas to come with him, but she chooses to stay as they need her. The film ends while Pocahontas is standing at the top of a cliff and watching the ship depart back to England.

Throughout the movie, all the Native American men are mostly seen wearing a piece of clothing stretched between the legs and fastened to the hips. It covers their genitals and bottom. It was often worn as it was comfortable during the hot days, and one could move freely. Some of them are wearing leggings. Women of the tribe have a simple dress on. Some of them are decorated with a belt and some are not.

After the English arrive at the shore of Virginia, the American Indians are seen discussing the visitors together around a fire. One man who appears to be the medicine man of the tribe comes forward to explain what he sees. He is connected to the spirits and has visions of what the settlers will cause. He describes them to be different, to have weapons that spout fire.

Pocahontas is another movie where the stereotype of Native Americans being alcoholics is missing. As it is a fairy tale intended mostly for children viewing, an image of drunk humans would not be an appropriate model. Not that there are many examples one can follow.

The source of inspiration for the movie was the historical story of the American Native girl. However, compared to the original, it certainly contains several inaccuracies. As a story aimed predominantly at a young public, some changes had to be made in order to reach a bigger audience.

The immediate thing someone who knows the story notices is the age of both characters. Born sometime around 1595, Pocahontas was between ten and twelve years old the first time the Englishmen arrived at Jamestown. However, in the movie, both characters seem to be in their 20s. Because the main genre that the Walt Disney Company releases is romance and fairy tales, it would be highly inappropriate to show an adult be in a relationship with someone so young like Pocahontas.

To conclude, Disney has alternated the movie to fit the targeted crowd. Through different alterations, they romanticized the historical bloodshed and provided deceit about a friendship between English settlers and Native Americans.

### 3.4 Smoke Signals – Chris Eyre, 1998

*Smoke Signals* is a movie directed by Chris Eyre. It was written and directed by Indians, and the cast is full of Native Americans starring as Native Americans. It tells a story about two Indian boys and their adventures on the Coeur d'Alene reservation in north-western Idaho while also dealing with grief and loss.

From the beginning, one can see the difference between the previous films that were analyzed and this one. Usually, the Native Americans were seen wearing stereotypical clothing that consisted of loin clothes, moccasins, or war paint. However, in this film, the American Indians are introduced in clothes such as jeans, leather jackets, or shirts without wearing a headdress or their face being painted with paint.

What must also be mentioned is that the movie is set during modern times as opposed to the typical westerns that seem to be always stuck in the past. Rather it focuses on the daily life of the First Nations and the problems they face.

As already mentioned, the film focuses on the lives of Victor and Thomas. When Thomas was a baby, his parents died in a house fire that was accidentally started by Arnold, Victor's dad. Out of guilt for starting it in the first place, he saves baby Thomas when he is thrown out of the window by his parents. Nevertheless, after the fire, Arnold cannot live with what he has caused, so he turns to alcohol to help deal with his sins. Eventually, it is the reason why he leaves for Phoenix together with all that he has put his family through.

It makes Victor quite angry. The next scene then jumps to Victor receiving the news of his father's death. His mother convinces him to travel to Phoenix to retrieve his father's ashes, but both of them do not have money to pay for the ticket. However, Thomas does have the money and offers them to Victor under one condition. He has to take him on the road. At first, Victor refuses as Thomas is this always smiling, optimistic guy who wears a suit all the time and enjoys telling stories about Arnold Joseph.

On the other hand, Victor is usually in a 'stoic' mood as he does not show his emotions. During the journey on the bus, he recommends it to Thomas. "Get stoic, Thomas. You're an



Indian."<sup>48</sup> (*Smoke Signals*) Because Indians were always depicted as the prairie warrior that hunts buffalos, Victor's idea of how he is supposed to act comes from that portrayal.

Most of the time, the movie acknowledges the stereotypical cliches by mentioning them, or the characters make fun of them. In this case, Victor teaches Thomas to look like the savage warriors they were made out to be, or else the white man will walk all over him. Through the joking, they express how ridiculous the American portrayal of the Native Americans is. Thomas, on the contrary, perfectly portrays the Noble Indian with his modesty and calmness. At the same time, he represents the medicine man's stereotype with his love for storytelling. It makes him a target for Victor's jokes. He also appears to be stuck in the past, in the exact moment when Arnold saved his life, not knowing or seeing what has become of Victor's father because of the guilt he tried to drown in alcohol.

After arriving in Phoenix, they meet Suzy Song, who is a friend and a neighbour of Arnold Josephs. She shares her own memories mainly with Victor while also sharing what happened that faithful night when Thomas' parents died. She convinces Victor to check his father's trailer for belongings he may want, and thanks to that, he begins to make peace with his late father. After they get into an accident on the way back, Victor ends up in hospital because he ran the whole night trying to find help and nearly dies of exhaustion. In the end, he is able to release much of the anger that defined his character.

In the movie's final scenes, Victor is seen spreading his father's ashes in the river. As he scatters the ashes, he screams while letting go of all the pent-up anger and resentment, all of his hurt feelings.

Since this is a coming-of-age story about two boys dealing with grief it does not include many women that would represent the usual women stereotypes. Briefly it depicts a relationship of the two boys with strong female characters including Thomas' grandmother, who took care of him after his parents died or Victor's mother Arlene. We can see her struggling with drinking as her husband and enduring the abuse that came after Arnold drank too much. No longer are

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<sup>48</sup> *Kouřové signály* [Smoke Signals] [film]. Režie Chris EYRE, Kanada / USA, 1998

they representing the exotic Indian Princesses, that attract white men but the hardships that the native communities went through.

### 3.5 The New World – Terrence Malick, 2005

*The New World* is a historical romantic drama written and directed by Terrence Malick. It was first released in 2005. Same as Disney's *Pocahontas*, it depicts the story of founding Jamestown and the relationship between Pocahontas, John Smith, and later her husband, John Rolfe. The film is not supposed to be a recounting of the original story since there is no evidence of the romantic relationship shown in the movie between Pocahontas and John Smith.

The movie starts with the Native Americans rushing to the shore to watch the arrival of the English ships. Captain Smith, who has been brought into Jamestown as a prisoner, being punished for his previous actions, is freed once they land. Both cultures greet each other with curiosity and fear of the other. While exploring the new land, Smith catches sight of Pocahontas, who is freely playing in the grass.

Compared to the Disney version, the image of Pocahontas is a little bit more realistic. No longer is she looking like a Barbie doll. Her age also, more or less, corresponds to the original legend. For someone depicted as a free-spirited child at the beginning, Pocahontas represents this stereotype of a beautiful exotic Indian Princess that attracts the white man throughout the movie. She is scantily dressed, wearing two pieces of clothing covering her chest and barely her bottom while the two main characters are enamored with each other. Later on, as she matures, she is seen being covered by a different dress. The other Native Americans are seen throughout the movie wearing clothes constructed from the natural environment, such as deerskins and feathers. Mostly it is a scrap of fabric tied at the waist and covering their genitals.

As the ship's captain sails back to England to get more supplies, Smith is sent to find the tribe's village. Along the way, he is ambushed and taken prisoner by Pocahontas' father, Powhatan. To them, the English settlers are threats, and he wants to execute Smith, but before he can kill him, Pocahontas saves his life by covering his body with hers. His life is spared.

While staying with the tribe, Pocahontas teaches him the language and the customs of the tribe. Smith forms a bond with the chief's daughter and falls in love with her. Usually, what the typical western showed us, was the First Nations always living on the Plains in tepees and hunting buffalo. However, this movie shows us a depiction of Native Americans living in forested places in longhouses while keeping themselves fed by farming.

Later, Smith must return to Jamestown. Pocahontas is convinced she will see him again even though, according to Powhatan, they are to stay only through winter and then leave in spring. Until then, there will not be any conflicts between the cultures.

In the meantime, many settlers have died or been killed by their own people in Jamestown. The supplies are getting smaller, and people are getting restless. Upon his arrival, John is appointed Governor of the settlement because the man who had taken power during his absence is killed. Thanks to Pocahontas and her providing the supplies, the colonizers are able to survive the harsh winter.

When spring arrives, the tribe's chief sends some spies who find out that the British are planning on staying much longer than promised, as they are starting to grow their food. He orders an attack on the settlement. One more time, Pocahontas saves their lives as she warns them about the planned attack. For her betrayal, she is exiled to another tribe.

After a terrible conflict, the English wanted to organize trade for Pocahontas, being convinced that her presence at the settlement would protect them from any further attacks. After all, she is her father's favorite child. However, Smith refuses to put her in danger again, and his title is stripped from him.

When Pocahontas arrives in Jamestown and is reunited with John, he does hard labor in the woods. They continue with their love affair, but Smith is conflicted and realizes his need to discover new lands is more important than his feelings for her. That is why he returns to England on King's orders and requests his friend to tell her he drowned at sea. After hearing the news, she continues to adapt to life in Jamestown.

John Rolfe, who arrived from England, falls in love with Pocahontas. Although she has not forgotten about John Smith yet, she agrees to marry him. Through baptism, she takes on a new name, Rebecca. Eventually, she even gives him a son. However, after hearing that John Smith is still alive, their relationship is tested, considering she believes Smith to be her husband.

Later on, they are invited to England by the King and the Queen, where a special meeting is arranged. Together with her travelled a few other Native Americans. It shows that they were

seen as something exotic and unusual, maybe even inhuman; they were brought to England to be looked at and observed.

In London, she privately meets with Smith but later returns to Rolfe, assuring him of her love for him. The two plan to return to Virginia, but Pocahontas dies before the voyage and is buried in England while John Rolfe returns with his son back to America.

Not only does she represent the Indian Princess, but she also is considered to be an example of the Good Indian. She rescued John Smith from being beaten to death, brought the settlers some food to survive the winter, and warned them about a planned attack. She saved their lives a few times, establishing herself as their ally.

Like most of the analyzed movies in this thesis, even *The New World* does not display the stereotype of alcoholism. Even though the white culture introduced alcohol to the First Nations early, it seems to be depicted mostly as today's issue rather than a problem existing during the past centuries.

Even the stereotype of a medicine man is not present since the main focus of the story is on a relationship between the two young people instead of showing more of the lives of the Native Americans.

Between *Pocahontas* and *The New World*, Terrence Malick's movie seems more accurate. The character of the American Indian girl looks closer to the actual age she was said to be when she first encountered John Smith. However, the actress playing her was fourteen years old during the filming. There is not much dialogue throughout the movie; mostly, a voiceover presented more as internal thought.

All the movies were specifically chosen because they show different types of films concerning the stereotypical portrayal of Native Americans. *Broken Arrow* and *Dances with Wolves* can be both considered as westerns that depict the First Nations and their lives and cultures differently than the typical savages. *Dances with Wolves* did it quite exceptionally as there are Native American actors playing the roles of the Sioux and Pawnee tribes, not like in *Broken Arrow* where the roles are played by white people. They also use the Sioux language

when speaking with each other. There are not many movies where the actors had to learn the Native language to make it more authentic.

*Pocahontas* and *The New World* both deal with the legend of Pocahontas in their own way. Both show the story differently. *The New World* presents the legend more truthfully than the Disney version. Although there are still some inaccuracies, for example, the relationship between the two main characters never happened. The last movie, *Smoke Signals*, was written and produced by Indians, and it shows the reality of life on reservations and the problems they deal with. At the same time it also mentions the typical stereotypes the Native Americans have to live with.

## 4. Conclusion

The aim of this bachelor thesis was to point out the stereotypical portrayal of Native Americans. It also analyzed their depiction in the movies that were specifically chosen for this.

The first chapter introduced the term stereotype and what it implies, that making assumptions based on other people's opinions is not correct. Few examples of national stereotypes were also presented even though not all of them concern races and characteristic of nationalities. Furthermore, I talked about the stereotypes that are connected to Native Americans. Moreover, I mentioned the white superiority over other races and the need to either rid the earth of them since they were seen as inhuman or to protect them because they cannot do it themselves. Despite there being more information about the First Nations when film was invented, the stereotypes were deeply rooted into people, that no one really tried to learn more about them and change the representation. After that, the attention was aimed at few specific stereotypes that were described and later used to analyze the portrayal of Native Americans in movies.

The second chapter tries to give an idea about the legend of Pocahontas. After a failed settlement on Roanoke Island the English managed to establish a colony of Jamestown in 1607. It was then when John Smith met the famous Pocahontas who was twelve years old and saved his life. There was no romantic relationship between them. He recorded his impressions and adventures in called *The General Historie of Virginia*, that was later published. The historical background has been mentioned as I wanted to situate the story at the right time in history. It is later followed by a brief description of both John Smith and Pocahontas.

The last part of this thesis dealt with the five chosen movie adaptations, that were meant to be analyzed with the help of the few selected stereotypes. These titles were chosen to represent different types of films. *Broken Arrow* and *Dances with Wolves* are western film adaptations that portray Indians differently from the typical savages who enjoy killing members of the white race. *Pocahontas* is the first film where Disney introduced a princess with a darker skin type than had been typical before. This animated fairy tale is a retelling of the legend of Pocahontas. *The New World* deals with the same legend but it is more similar to the original tale than the Walt Disney version. The last title is *Smoke Signals*, an independent film directed

by Chris Eyre, a native of the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes. This film shows the reality of Indian reservations in the 1990s and the problems that Indians struggle with today.

The individual film chapters consist of a short paragraph containing information about the film, a brief description of the plot, and then are analyzed in terms of the stereotypes of 1) The Savage Warrior, 2) The Noble Indian, 3) The Wise Man, 4) The Woman Stereotype, 5) Alcoholism and 6) Fashion. All of these are described and discussed in detail in the theoretical part of the thesis.

However, these categories are not fully represented in any selected films. Pocahontas is a story whose target audience is mostly children. Thus, it does not contain any mention of alcoholism. Nor would we find it in the other films except Smoke Signals. In The New World, on the other hand, we do not notice anyone portraying the stereotype of the wise man, just as we would be hard-pressed to find one in Broken Arrow.

The bloodthirsty warrior and fashion stereotype are the only ones present in all the films discussed. The portrayal of Indians as noble people is prominent in almost all the selected works, as is their negative portrayal.

This bachelor thesis shows that even though the film industry has evolved since its inception, the portrayal of Native Americans is still largely the same, and stereotypes still cling to them. Also, the legend of Pocahontas is still adapted in cinema to reach the most audience. Although the film usually resembles the original story, the legend is never presented according to reality.



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