

Stereotyping and Racism (Kira Holland)

People never truly understand the damage they do when they assume an entire culture or race is all the same; when a handful of people do something bad that everyone is the exact same way. Stereotyping and Racism has been a problem basically since the beginning of time. But, the Indigenous People of Canada have it bad. Even though they are the first people to populate Canada, we don't give them what was promised when the settlers came to the shores of our beautiful country. From taking their own land away from them to broken promises, one of the top issues has to be how we stereotype them.

To begin with, the media plays a huge role in the stereotyping towards the native people. When you look on the news or in the newspapers, the only time you ever see a native group or person is one of the 4 D's: Dancing, Drumming, Drunk, or Dead. When you see native people drumming or hear their drums, nobody actually cares about what the meaning of the song is about. They just listen to the sound the drums make and enjoy it. Their singing is normally described as "chanting" rather than singing. Our idea of singing is "words" coming out of our mouths and we don't usually understand what the native tongue is saying. When they wear their dancewear, people believe that it's all for looks, nothing traditional there to care about, when in reality there's a lot more meaning behind them than just a fashion statement. A sad step that the media takes is a story of a drunken native catches more of a story than a white person or black person or any other race. Due to the constant stereotype of all Natives having drinking problems and drug addictions after the residential schools still come into play even today. The RCAP said "The widely held belief that most Aboriginal people consume excessive amounts of alcohol on a regular basis appears to be incorrect." But of course, nobody listens to that and want to go on with their own beliefs on what they hear in the media and see for themselves. Then of course there's the "The only good Indian, is a dead one." When a native person has passed away people go crazy. They all get cheery because it's one less alcoholic/drug addict to worry about.

Then of course some of the stereotypes used towards the Native Peoples include: "Blood thirsty savages", which is one of the earliest stereotype from when the settlers first came to Canada, omit this one - already discussed. poor, lazy - these ones were also older stereotypes as Europeans looked at their cultural ways as lazy, not economically productive. Discuss the term ethnocentrism and explain how the settlers saw the FN without considering that cultures were completely different - they shared goods and land One of the latest ones is "casino rich".

Not everyone is a drunk. The main part of why being a drunk is a stereotype so popularly used is after the Residential Schools came into the picture and the survivors got out, they were and still are emotionally and mentally, possibly even physically, traumatized for the rest of their living days. They had nothing else to turn to, but then again, not everyone had turned to that state of mind to drink the pain away. A lot of the Native population is poor because they face the racism of their background and culture. Unable to find a steady job, it's a little complicated to find a way to make money. But, it is true that some Natives are very much successful in their workplace. As said before,

with the stereotype of Natives being lazy, is not necessarily their fault for not being able to find steady work. These people were never given proper education when they were younger. It's hard to find a job nowadays when you don't have your grade 12 finished. The impacts on the First Nations People from these few stereotypes alone, ruined a lot of their self esteem, they become ashamed of who they are. Learning in my Native Studies class that the suicide rates are higher in Native People than the rest of the population of Canada. It also ruins their cultural pride. Once again, it tells them to be ashamed of the things they practice and grew up with. The impact that these have on the non-First Nations is with our society looking down on the Natives, we get a bad perception of who they are as people and a bad perception of their culture. With parents of the past generation growing up with the thought of Natives being the bad people, they tell their kids what they were taught. Which then leads to a whole new cycle of racism and stereotypes. What needs to be done is the cycle to be broken once and for all.

Finally, there's ways to make these racist comments and stereotypes come to a halt and stop in their tracks. The way stereotypes for any person, group, race, or religion gets around is the opinions of other people. Like when you see someone with a leather jacket and a mohawk, some parents assume that they're actually trouble makers and tell their kids to stay away from people that look like that. That's basically how it started with the Native communities when the Europeans came to Canada. So, in order to stop this from happening, there's a few possible ways. Don't group everyone together as a culture. As stated before, there are some Natives that actually do have a drinking or drug problem. But, see, not everyone does. Some people actually are very much successful and don't suffer with problems such as fighting those addictions. There's also the option to actually sit down and talk to a Native person and see what they're actually like. Don't always believe what other people say. Because some people actually may have had a bad experience meeting someone and then say everyone of that culture, race etc is like the one they talked to or met. Wait to see for yourself. Another huge possibility to put a stop to this racism and stereotyping actually is to go to a Native Friendship Centre. It's meant for some Ingenious People who lost knowledge of their culture or practices after the Residential Schools, due to them being told their practices were actually "evil". The friendship centres help with healing people with their own spirituality and practices. "Our long term goal is to accomplish change within the larger community and society as a whole, by validating and valuing the qualities of Anishnaabeg and our culture."(nijiki.com) There are a few really close areas that have Friendship centres that people can go to. It is also used to bring First Nations and non-First Nations people together as a whole.

In conclusion, the amount of stereotyping and racism towards the Native people needs to come to an end. It affects more than just the people being stereotyped, but the non First Nations too. The media plays a big role in the stereotyping community with only Indigenous people being put in the news due to the 4D's, the origin of where these assumptions came into play the role it does can be stopped, and following ways to make this all stop are possible. Think before you speak, because not everyone is the way some people and media puts them out to be.