

Controlling Land: Historical Representations of News Discourse in British Columbia [Abstract]

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News discourse about treaty issues privileges postcolonial discourses about ownership and governance of land and excludes a wide range of indigenous voices. This paper explores how news items interweave the frame "indigenous peoples as a threat" into their coverage of two events, analyzed as separate case studies, that have significant implications for the control of land in British Columbia. The first case study event is the Nisga'a's 1998 referendum on the Nisga'a Treaty and the second is the 2002 British Columbia Treaty Referendum. Reportage of both events was highly racialized and organized around the presumed threat that indigenous peoples pose to settler values. Discourse orbits around several rhetorical arguments, including "'our' government is colluding with First Nations to impose race-based governments on British Columbians; and "the will of the majority must prevail over the political maneuverings of minorities and other 'special interest groups.'" While news discourse focused on the potentially destructive impact of treaties on settler interests, any discussion of the enormous risks treaties represent for indigenous peoples was completely absent.

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