

A talk given by Dr. Roland Chrisjohn on November 17 2001 at MacGlaggan Hall, University of New Brunswick (Fredericton). Dr. Chrisjohn is currently the Director of Native Studies at St. Thomas University (Fredericton) and amongst other works is co-author of *The Circle Game: Shadow and Substance in the Residential School Experience in Canada*. An Oneida of the Iroquois Confederacy, he has spoken and written extensively about issues which affect Indigenous people of North America. Originally aired as an audio talk on the Radio Action Dance Party on CHSR FM 97.9, hosted by Pierre Loiselle.

Rhetoric in Reporting by Dr. Roland Chrisjohn.

What I'm going to be talking about is rhetoric in reporting. I will tell you a little bit about myself: at one time I was a reporter. I was the managing editor of the Tribal Indian News for three issues and the managing editor changed everybody's grammar so that it made sense, checked the spelling and then filled up the empty parts of the paper which was about 50% of an eight pager. The Tribal Indian News only ran for four issues and I did three of them. We were kind of issue driven more than anything else so there wasn't a heck of a lot to my background in journalism such as it was. But I've got a much better background in rhetoric and it came from a number of sources. More centrally and more recently I have been concerned with rhetoric because it has been a constant battle since I have been working in academia to sort of uncover the rhetoric that is used to pose as arguments. Here I was at a great advantage over other people in my discipline [psychology] but I had a double major in English also. One thing I found when I became a psychologist is that most psychologists do not have a course in rhetoric and most of them have absolutely no idea what logic is. Rhetoric traditionally has 3 different areas: one is the grammatical way of speaking; speaking and writing properly according to rules of grammar; a second one is logic which is to make sense with what it is that you are saying which has always been a traditional part of rhetoric and the last one is to win, which is that you learn how to fight unfairly if it doesn't look like you can win fairly.

When I was an undergraduate about thirty-five years ago, everybody took a course in rhetoric. There wasn't such a thing as you getting out of university without having at least one course in rhetoric which, by and large, they have made into a public speaking course because everybody is scared of talking publicly. But you did go through the introductory logical fallacies, what a footnote is and all that other kind of stuff as a matter of course. Also, when I was an undergraduate, I took a course in logic and when I started becoming faculty members at various places I never met another psychologist who had ever had a course in logic. I certainly had never met one who knew how to write. A lot of them claim to have taken courses in writing but psychological writing is impenetrably stupid so they never learned very much as far as writing goes.

Nowadays rhetoric is kind of limited in its scope. Of the students I know, none of them has ever taken a course in rhetoric. If you want to take a course in logic, it is generally something far outside your area of specialization and it has been a consistent part of my wondering as to why that happened. When did that switch take place and why did it happen? We get some sense of why and how it happened when we realize who the people who use rhetoric today are. The primary practitioners of rhetoric today are lawyers, advertisers and journalists. When you look at the reasons why advertisers and lawyers are using rhetoric, it's because they have a reason to be duplicitous or to disguise what it is that they are up to. The logic of buying Nike shoes so that you can be like Michael Jordan should escape everybody but the advertising campaign is "be like

Mike, be like Mike". Well you can strap million dollar shoes on my feet and there is no way I'm going to go out on the basketball court and play one on one with Michael Jordan himself. But enough people are willing to be swayed by such things because the logic or illogic of what is being presented to them as an argument in advertising is beyond them.

Lawyers keep having to remind people of this. The legal system is not about truth. The legal system is about what can or cannot be proven according to the rules of evidence. So it is a lawyer's job to argue persuasively, not properly. If they can get what they want by stretching the truth or putting into operation various tricks of language representation and so on, they are more likely to win. They don't like members of the jury, for example, being able to demolish wholesale, in the jury box during the trial or in the jury room afterwards, the stupidity of the arguments for either the prosecution or the defense. Instead it is much better if they can make an emotional appeal if it's going to work that way. Just think about the O.J. Simpson trial. If you know anything about rhetoric, watching the day-by-day goings-on in that trial, you begin to realize that neither side was arguing about whether or not he did it, they were arguing around it in various ways trying to create the proper emotional atmosphere.

A short definition: rhetoric is an art of persuasive argumentation. Within persuasive argumentation you can reason properly. I find logical arguments quite persuasive. But it has been debased into something they now call mirror rhetoric which means that the point of it is to obscure the facts. Well, yes it can, but like I say, you can argue properly and that should have some weight. If people could recognize correct arguments as distinct from incorrect ones it should have some weight in their making up their minds about particular issues. That's not what the lawyers or advertisers are really about though.

The third group that I have put in, in terms of the people who use rhetoric, are the journalists. When I say advertisers and lawyers use rhetoric, they often do that willfully. In other words, they are actually taught tricks of representation and so on. So in that sense they are trying to manage knowledge of an archaic subject that the fewer practitioners of which there are, the better off they will be in practicing their work. Journalists aren't exactly in that circumstance. Some people are because journalism is a matter of advertising and newspapers are a matter of presentation. But a lot of the reporters are what Moliere calls [in a play entitled the same] the Bourgeois Gentleman. The bourgeois gentleman didn't know what prose was until he was told that it is just ordinary and straight forward speech at which point he said "Ha! I've been speaking prose all my life without even knowing it!" Far too many journalists, in my experience, are users of rhetoric when they think that what they are doing is good reporting; that what they are doing is actually presenting a balanced account. The difficulty is that this is not true. In various ways they can fall into systematic misrepresentation of what they are talking about and not even know it. So while it is an accusation at the level of lawyers and advertisers that they know what they are doing and they are trying to get away with it, it is not invariably the case that this is what journalists are up to. Maybe the editors are up to that, but a lot of journalists are not up to it.

So this is kind of what I want to talk about: that there is plenty of rhetoric to be identified within journalism. Some of it will just be a kind of knee-jerk rhetoric. In other words the fact that journalists probably do not have (even though they supposedly have training in good writing) training in logical argumentation, logical fallacies, fair presentation of facts and so on. So a lot of what passes as analysis or fair presentation is not either.

I am going to start with the work of a guy by the name of Norman Faircloth entitled Language and Power. It is an interesting book that he wrote back in the 1980s and the work comes from the position that ideology is the prime means of manufacturing consent. The concept of manufacturing consent is the subject of a Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman book entitled Manufacturing Consent. Chomsky did not invent the concept and he points out in the movie *Manufacturing Consent* that it was Walter Lippman who came up with the phrase manufacturing consent. The idea is that in a democracy where you can't actually beat people into submission [for very long anyway] and get away with it, people have to be persuaded to do the wrong thing. That the consent to go in a particular direction that power wants you to go is a matter of rhetoric, then, rather than one of "well, we're going to let the insightful, thoughtful, deep thinking population make up its own mind and that's the direction they will go in". No! If you are in power, you don't want people making up their own mind, you want you making up their mind so you have to manufacture that consent. Norman Faircloth's book came out before Herman and Chomsky appropriated that particular concept, but again, there is a very great deal of overlap between what Faircloth is talking about: that ideology is the prime means of manufacturing consent.

Further along in Faircloth we find that he dismisses mainstream linguistics as holding any benefit of understanding the process of manufacturing consent ideologically with language:

"Mainstream linguistics is an a-social way of studying language which has nothing to say about relationships between language and power and ideology."

He is quite right on that: the problem, though, is that mainstream linguistics is not all of the linguistics. There are some non-mainstream linguistics that apply to the problem of understanding how language is used for rhetorical purposes and I will get into some of that here. Finally, the last thing I want to quote from Faircloth is a generic overview for the talk:

"One aspect of power is the capacity to impose and maintain a particular structuring of some domain or other, a particular way of dividing it into parts, of keeping the parts demarcated from each other and a particular ordering of these parts in terms of hierarchical relationships of domination and subordination."

That's what his book is about: how language is used to represent reality a particular way so that it really doesn't matter what you say; once you have accepted the ground rules, you end up talking like the people you set out to criticize in the first place. So it is a very interesting work from that point of view. There are people who have done this in journalism. Primary among these, as I have already mentioned, are Herman and Chomsky. As you probably all know, they have regular columns or interviews for their analysis of what goes on in news media of various sorts. I also made a lot of use, when I was much younger, of Michael Parenti's work. Inventing Reality is still a terrific introduction to the rhetoric of news mis-representation. And then there are the people from Common Courage Press (again for general information) such as Norman Solomon and Jeff Cohen who put out quite prominent titles such as Wizards of the Media of Oz and Through the Media looking Glass and By Invitation Only by Dave Crodo and William Hynes. A good environmental one is Toxic Sludge is Good for You and another Solomon book

The Habits of Highly Deceptive Media. Common Courage puts out a lot of these which are quite useful as compilations of columns that often appear in a magazine called Extra!

But there is a problem with all of this and that is that when Solomon or Cohen or one of these other folks look at it, they have very much particularized their analysis. They have seized on a specific issue or some really stupid thing that some member of a government has said somewhere and they demonstrate the duplicity, the evasion and what is not being said, the historical fabrication that is going on and you get the sense over and over again that they are talking about a multitude of very specific problems. This case, this case and this case. That's alright but it is not a way of teaching general principles, in my opinion. You can abstract the general principles from that but you have to read a hell of a lot of particular cases. Sometimes it is a lot better to say that this is what we can be looking for anytime we are looking at an analysis of this and this is where non-mainstream linguistics come in. There are some people who have pointed at what the generic principles are and they have had their own axes to grind when they were doing it but that doesn't make it less useful for our purposes.

If somebody is going to say what is the best introduction to the politics of rhetoric and linguistic analysis of it I would show you Julia Penelope's *Speaking Freely and Learning the Lies of the Fathers' Tongues*. I think this is one of the most dangerous books I've ever read because even though she is talking about something she calls the patriarchal universe of discourse, essentially sexism in English, you cannot get through this book without beginning to realize that what she has put her finger on or identifying is a much broader war. It is a war of keeping our minds clear and open as opposed to having everything that we think and say obscured by a set of common conditions that we don't even begin to investigate. She investigates them in respect to anti feminism in North America but the principles are quite generic. If this lecture is any good at all it's probably because I stole it from her. What can we or I take from Julia Penelope? The thing I like best about Penelope is that she puts her finger on it right away: the difficulties with reportage or the way things are represented, and it doesn't matter whether it's academic media of some sort or a news media, is that what is going on is the suppression of the agency. What rhetoric seems to be involved in doing is suppressing agency and that is we live in a world in which some things just happen and there's not a heck of a lot we can do about it. It doesn't matter how much we pray, the sun will come up tomorrow. We do need oxygen and if the oxygen goes away, we're all going to die so there are some things that we have absolutely no control over. But there are other things that do require agents. In other words, somebody has to do something in order for it to happen and in various ways it's a very useful thing to be able to either deny that somebody has actually done something or to point in the wrong direction when something happens. So the suppression of agency comes to be a very central feature of the war of words that is going on.

If we use some of Penelope's examples: in formal linguistics, there is something called the deixis or deictic. She calls it the dummy it and that is things like "it is thought" that such and such; "it is believed"; etc. when you hear people talking like that you say "well if you are not paying attention." When somebody says it is believed then the immediate question, if it is a formally structured English sentence is, who believes, who knows that? You say it is well known; then it is well known by whom? Or it is thought; well who thinks? But they say it is thought that the Indians came across the Bering land bridge 15,000 years ago. It is thought? No, you think. We have a different explanation so by saying it is thought you do not point at

anybody, you don't show that there is actually debate about the issue or that there is something to be resolved one way or the other, that somebody else can have another point of view. It thinks and nobody can argue with it. So there is often a dummy it in some of these kinds of sentences.

A second way of suppressing agency is simply to omit the agent. So if you say, for example, "love is hard to find", well where is the agent in that? If you sit down and think about it, the phrase is supposed to be a bland truism and a translation that would have an agent in it would be like "love is a difficult thing for everybody to find" and if you say that then, you know somebody might say "well I know Sam over there and he doesn't have a heck of a lot of trouble" or whatever but at least there is an agent in there. Sometimes it gets more telling the omission of an agent. She has a quote from George Bush the first: "there's only one reason for ordering an escalation of the war and that is to end it." He was talking about the Gulf war. Now, where is the agent in there? She says a close paraphrase would have to be something along the line where you put the agent into the sentence that George Bush conveniently left out: "there is only one reason for my ordering an escalation of the war and that is for me to end it." So what is left out; what happens when you leave the agent out? One thing is something I've called in my own work is that it is a naturalization of what is going on. It's an unfolding of Mother Nature that the way to end a war is to escalate it by ordering more bombing or whatever. Ah it's in a physics book somewhere! This is how one ends a war, by escalating it. And it's also an appeal to common wisdom: since it's an unfolding of nature, then you are invited in on the joke.

Yes I can see the president's point, he is citing a truism of some sort; something that is so completely obvious that no one is going to argue about it. In doing this naturalization and bringing you in on it by calling it common wisdom, what's you've actually done by suppressing the agency is that you've got a rider attached to that and that is war is something that nobody is responsible for, certainly not George the 1st or the 2nd. Something else Penelope talks about is a news report: "2000 civilians were killed today in an authorized bombing of such and such." An authorized bombing? Well, you have to say how does that bombing get authorized? Who has the authority of taking the lives of other human beings? So those questions would come up if you were to say, "2000 civilians were killed today in a bombing authorized by George Bush." Suddenly George Bush would become a war criminal or at least subjected to that kind of speculation or at least someone would raise the question "who gave you the right to violate that particular section of the human rights charter" and so on. But the sentence works without putting the agent in so you don't add anything that you don't actually need.

Another way of suppressing agency is probably the most generic one. It's called the passive voice in linguistics or what Penelope calls the agent less passive. What's a passive voice? In English we have an active way of saying a sentence and a passive way of saying a sentence. For example: "John is boiling the eggs" which is an active statement that John is actually doing something and a passive one is "The eggs are being boiled by John." So now it's put into a passive voice because the eggs are subject in the sentence even though they are not the agent. Notice that you can leave "by John" out and it still works in a sentence. Now it's generally thought in mainstream linguistics, that thing Faircloth's system is about, that active and passive voices are simply restatements of one another, that one is logically entailed by the other. That's simply not the case. Robinson, in another fairly obscure but non mainstream linguistics text, says it very clearly: 'the deep difference between the active and the passive is the quite basic

distinction one would make between what we do (active) and what we experience or suffer (passive)'. If I say that I do something, I take a certain responsibility for it, but when I suffer something, I'm only responsible for how I suffer. When you have an agent-less passive, when you can remove the agent by turning an active into a passive sentence, then you have removed any clear responsibility according to the responsibility. Here we have another pair of sentences that Robinson talks about: "John is growing a beard"/ "A beard is being grown by John". He says that there is no way that these sentences are parallel to one another, that logically one entails the other because it makes it sound in the second sentence that the beard is not being grown on John's face. That he has a beard somewhere that he is growing. "John has caught a cold"/ "A cold has been caught by John". That gives the impression that he doesn't have a cold and that he's got it in a box somewhere. So there is not an overlap or one to one correspondence between the active and passive and this has been exploited over and over again by people who want to suppress that there is an agent at work somewhere. Here's something else from Penelope: Rephrase this sentence in an active sense and then you will realize that you are saying something slightly different or at least more informative than saying it in the passive.

The thief was arrested. Well, then you would say "by whom?" Who did the arresting, were they authorized to do that arresting, under whose authority?

Children should be spanked. By anybody? For any reason? Is it good to have children running around howling from beatings? The air taxes were authorized. A very intelligent one for our present circumstance is: Students designated as troublemakers will be carefully supervised. So, we are going to have saying, "who designated, who gets to point out which ones and then who does the supervision?" By making it a passive sentence, you've left out the fact that you are essentially endorsing and operating a police state. Here's one for this week: "A serious conflict situation will arise if the marchers try to reach the IMF meeting." Here we have naturalizing again. If the marchers are suddenly in control of the events, if they try to reach that meeting, then the conflict situation will arise kind of like a mushroom in a field after a rainstorm. I have got a couple of passives that have been troubling me after teaching a course in suicide this semester and if you read the literature on people who are saying "this is what is happening in native suicide and it's a bad thing" and whatever. I have to emphasize that the person who I am about to quote from is against native suicides.

He thinks of himself as a liberal, progressive intervener in it but this is how he has chosen to summarize some of the information on native suicide: "Aboriginal peoples are experiencing tremendous and disproportionate amounts of social conflict." Here we have the agent-less passive: we are experiencing disproportionate and tremendous amounts? Notice that you could write that sentence in entirely the opposite way. Equality has not always been the hallmark of non-Indian life in this country because they don't extend it to the Indians. That would make perfect sense but instead it makes it seem like somehow we are responsible for our lack of equality.

Julia Penelope also talks about the beget passives. There are two ways of saying the same sentence: one uses the active form of the word be and the other one is to get. So we can say "the marching students were attacked" but you are more likely to read in the newspapers "the marching students got attacked". What's the difference? Well, because whoever did the attacking

were obviously responsible for the attack but the second way of putting it makes it seem like the victims are to blame in some way: “the students got attacked”. There are a couple of similar ones along the same lines: “women are raped every day” and “women get raped every day”. It sounds like a subtle difference and it is a terribly subtle difference but the second one makes it seem like the women are somehow being provocative; that they are at least partially responsible for the fact that they are “getting” raped.

“Lots of people are killed in their homes” / “Lots of people get killed in their homes.” Sure, they invite people in to kill them. What you have here again is the agent less passive by doing something like that, by avoiding the agent. It not only is beginning to dis abuse the people who are responsible from responsibility by not being named; it’s now involving the victims in the problem in the first place. This is something that is much more widely known by work done by William Ryan years ago called Blaming the Victim but something that we constantly forget because we end up over and over again blaming the victim. Again, with respect to native suicide, we are supposedly responsible for the fact that we are living under unequal circumstances so we are now involved in the blame for what is happening.

There are also what you call varied propositions. In other words, there are things that aren’t argued simply by the way they are presented. Sometimes they seem to be rather innocuous: “there was a beautiful painting in his hallway”. When you are reporting that it is as though, objectively speaking, you have a beautiful painting. What the person isn’t saying is “in my opinion, it is a beautiful painting”. Art is taste, right? SO how do they know? A funny one is a “paid vacation”. Well, you are going to work here, work for me and you will get a paid vacation every year. Ok I want my paid vacation and the boss says, “Go ahead and pay for it”.

This is something that oftentimes happens to me when I am accused of incendiary language. I use incendiary language? What you mean is that in your opinion I use incendiary language, in my opinion, I simply report the facts the way that they are. I am not setting anything on fire, you’re actually willing to set me on fire. Another review of my book on Residential Schools, which was about how Canada’s policy literally, exactly, perfectly conforms to the UN Convention on Genocide, said something very interesting. The person who wrote the review said that what Chrisjohn calls genocide is something scholars call discrimination or maltreatment. So there is a double thing there: first of all that I am not a scholar because scholars say that but Chrisjohn says something different so his book is not scholarship and he is not a scholar. It also has other ridiculous varied propositions: that scholars get to decide what genocide is. As I point out over and over again, if you actually read the genocide convention, I don’t see how there could be an argument. But when you are making these kinds of varied propositions, you have to know your audience and know that no one is actually going to run over and actually check whether the reviewer is correct or whether Chrisjohn is correct.

Another time what was said about me is that Chrisjohn’s book on residential schools is very judgmental. I had to reply and say that calling me judgmental is making a judgment. That means that for some reason you are allowed to make judgments and I am not. Now, if you can explain the logic of that to me, I would be willing to listen to it but it’s an attempt to sort of simply assert that it is an objective circumstance that I am a particular way while they are being exactly that way. One thing that Penelope runs past and I think deserves some attention is pompous speech. I

love bad pompous speech because it's so humorous. Now, Richard Mitchell has written a number of books and writes in a magazine called the New Grammarian and it is, more or less, about the strange ways in which some academics sometimes choose to speak. His politics are a little bit right of center but that doesn't mean that he is wrong when he finds gobbledygook. He quotes:

Here is some swell news from the newsletter from the Minnesota Higher education coordinating commission: "Minnesota post secondary education is at the threshold of what may become the most dramatic transition ever experienced in the state's educational enterprise according to the higher education commission. Several partially interrelated circumstances and forces are converging in such a manner as to cause a profound impact on the shape of education beyond high school, according to Making the Transition, the commission's biannual report. Minnesota post secondary education is also faced with considerable uncertainty says the report. Some of the uncertainties stem from conflicting and changing societal forces that impinge on education, some emanate from lack of agreement as to what constitutes desirable and non-desirable directions for post secondary education.

Now that's so common that we listen to it and we think that it makes sense. But if we give Richard Mitchell two seconds with it, he starts saying things like:

"Have you noticed the remarkable subtleties of his elegant metaphorical texture? It's not the threshold of a transition, it's on the threshold of what might become a transition. Circumstances enforces partially interrelated therefore partially uninterrelated, converge but not just in any old way, they converge in such a manner as to cause an impact. Maybe not a profound one, but potentially profound and an impact that we might have missed had the circumstances and forces converge in some other way. And that uncertainty, some of it stems from forces, some of it emanates from lack. Ah! The mind reels."

In academia, you learn to spin out crap like that and people now just buy it. You kind of expect somebody to stand up and talk like that and that it's supposed to be making sense. And when they don't, you kind of disappointed because obviously he's not a literate person or whatever. Well, that is what rhetoric courses used to get rid of. This is what we bought into by the gradual fazing out of rhetoric: pompous speech is the be all and end all.

Just a few more things: one is the word selection or what I called euphemisms and dysphemisms. And these are kinds of things that in my own work, I can say many times, I have to run into. I don't know how many times people start off a sentence or told me "Indians lost their culture, their language, they lost their way of life." I have to point out, they didn't lose anything. It was stolen. If somebody takes a gun and puts to your head, says get out of your car, then drives off in it, you don't go to the police officer and say "officer, I lost my car". There was a whole machinery involved in there. But you use a euphemism: 'lost' and it is completely misleading: where's the agent in that? Lost involves you: "I lost my culture, I put it down a second ago and it was right there..." SO you're partly responsible. So if you lose your car, you are partly responsible, but not if it's stolen, which is the accurate term?

Word selection, again when you use euphemisms, I don't know how many times George Bush is going to say "our way of life." Why doesn't he say, "Unbridled monopoly capitalism"? There's

a good reason why he doesn't: it's because he would prove all of us right! That that's what's it's about, but no "our way of life".

Another interesting sort of rhetorical device is reification and this has interesting connections with the rest of language that I can't talk about here because it's too big, but when you start talking about a concept as though it was a thing and you begin imparting human characteristics to it, which is what reification is, all kinds of interesting things happen. For instance: "The white House said today..." Did you get it on film? A talking house?! No, no. Somebody in the White House who is representative of a particular form of government or whatever said something. That is kind of a silly one but it becomes less silly when somebody says "the circumstances demanded that we shoot tear gas in the crowd of protestors." The circumstances demanded? I didn't even see a circumstance there and I didn't know it could demand anything. What they are saying is that "I made up my mind to do it as an agent, but I'm not really responsible because the circumstance told me to." Suddenly circumstances have all of these human powers.

There are a lot of empty words when one goes looking around. The empty one that they are flogging on television now is freedom. Oh yes, they hate freedom, they are against freedom. What the hell do they mean? Freedom when you've now essentially suspended nine tenths of the constitution of the US. Well, yeah that's real freedom that you are holding onto. Our way of life, again, is another one of these rather empty words particularly when you never tie it to anything that you actually mean by it. A real good one in Indian country that we hear from the government all the time is reconciliation. Reconciliation is the emptiest of terms because when you begin examining it you say "then, we were conciled once, and we're going to get conciled again, that's why it is a re- conciliation." And what were we conciled with supposedly? Ah, I see, our destruction and assimilation by mainstream society! So we haven't it right up until now and now we're going to do it again and this is what reconciliation is about. Oooh! New partnership is one of those. Oh, there's going to be a new partnership between Indians and non-Indians. And all I can say is that I remember the old partnership and in that one, one of the partners was embezzling like mad and what are we going to do about that part of it? Because I don't see the connection here.

Then we have these distortions at the point of origin, which is a form of rhetorical gesture which is very common. I like Parenti's example of the WWI general who kept two diaries. One that he kept up to date, more or less, the other one that he wrote in afterwards to make it seem like he was pressioned about what was about to happen: "oh I think that the Germans are going to attack along this line today" this was like three days after the attack had happened, but he had entered it on the wrong date in the diary so that it made it look like he was smarter than he actually was. Smarter than the fool he was according to Parenti's work. So if you are careful, you can sort of reconstitute history the way that you want to reconstitute it if you were somewhat in charge of it. It's that old phrase from Parenti where he quotes Churchill "Gentlemen, history will be kind to us because I intend to write it." That's distortion at the point of origin, but that goes on in Indian country also.

I remember the law commission of Canada just last year did a report on institutional child abuse that I had objected to before they got around to doing it and when the report came out. In the report, they actually mention some of my work on residential schools and the genocide

convention. Here we have an example of distortion at the point of origin because they completely mis represent my argument when they say that I am talking about article c of the genocide convention when anybody who bothered to spend five minutes with my book will realize that I am basically talking about article e where it says that it is an act of genocide to take children away from their parents and put them under the control of other people. Period.

I'd like to argue the other four, but I don't have to. There's something that has so clearly happened in the residential school that is outlawed or identified as an act of genocide that nobody has to make this argument. But that's not how the law commission of Canada decided to review Chrisjohn and Young. They said 'oh, Chrisjohn and Young make this big deal about article c' and, again, it's one of these 'the scholars don't really agree with Chrisjohn and Young.' Again, you have to know your audience and if you're going to get away with suppression at the point of origin, they have to be absolutely sure that nobody who reads their report is going to go read Chrisjohn and Young and that nobody who reads the report is actually going to read the UN Genocide Convention. You have to understand that this is the Law Commission of Canada who is writing this and we have two hypothesis, then: the fact that they don't report Chrisjohn and Young's emphasis on point e means that either they didn't actually read what they are quoting or that they are too stupid themselves not to have checked Chrisjohn and read all the way down themselves, they couldn't get to the end of the paragraph, just two sentences further along in the Genocide Convention which would have identified, well it doesn't matter what Chrisjohn and Young say, we struck pay dirt! Canada was involved in genocide!' Or that they were acting to hide that information from their readership.

I like both hypotheses: that they are too stupid and that they were duplicitous. I think that it's not an either or circumstance. The important thing is suppression at the point of origin.

The last thing, which should be an enormous part of rhetoric, is simply the identification of bad arguments. I've talked to many lawyers, and they don't learn any kind of formal logic, but they do learn how to argue logical fallacies and how to make the m sound reasonable. It's always annoys the heck out of me, because some of my friends are lawyers, they think somehow that somehow I am susceptible to this, like I'm the idiot they take the jury and the judge, and their own customers to be. It's an insult to my intelligence, it should be an insult to everybody's intelligence that they think they can lie or that they can argue badly with impunity. The same way that advertisers should be ashamed to behave that way. But you can't go into all the logical fallacies, there's just too many of them and that's probably a good reason to take a course in logic, if nothing else, than to sort get a run through of common logical reasoning errors, how to spot them and what the logical refutation if of them. I've got a little book "Informal logic" that gives a quick and dirty intro to logic. Kopi's book "Introduction to Logic" is also very good for that. I want to come to an end here and the bottom line in all of this for me is that we have a fight over the background assumptions.

By taking the agent out, then you do end up doing two things which is 1) you are letting the people who are responsible off the hook and 2) you are blaming the victim. When Julia Penelope does this in her book on "Speaking Freely" she is talking about something she calls the pud: the patriarchal universe of discourse and over and over again, she is making the case that English is very prone to being able to be warped to say and do sexist things; to hide them as the natural unfolding of the universe and so on, that's why her book is important. But I hate to tell her this: that the patriarchal universe of discourse is one part of the overall struggle that is going on. That

you can quite legitimately have an interest in one particular area but I see it everywhere: when I was working more centrally in psychology I don't know how many stupid, bad psychological arguments I had to deal with on a daily basis which is simply the common received wisdom of psychology. I remember one professor telling me that sex and violence must be strongly related because they are close together in the rat brain. The violence centers and the sex centers. And I said, "So the banker must have been robbed by the baker because the bakery is next door to the bank?" Why would you argue something like that? There is no logic to your argument and yet this is considered wisdom in some areas. Like I say, I think the psychologists are just stupid, I think lawyers and advertisers are duplicitous. What is the fight about, I guess? I'd say that there is a larger fight here. Rather than calling it the patriarchal universe of discourse. In some of my writings, I've used other people's words to call it methodological individualism. It's an ideological picture of the world that things pre-exist because of what goes on internally, personally and individually. That's an ideology, it's not a fact and it cannot be allowed to come up in discussion because when you begin to realize that then you begin to realize that agency and responsibility and these other things are very complex issues that you can't dismiss with a wave of the hand or by fracturing a sentence in English a particular way. I can't tell you about MI because I teach whole courses in that and it would take forever but I guess one of the things I would finish on is what to do about it.

I doubt very seriously that most journalists buy into this patriarchal universe of discourse or MI by design. It's literally the fact that most people are simply not exposed to alternative ways of representing reality and people are not drilled: Frederick did not drop by accident out of university curricula. When everybody is stupid a particular way, it's not an accident. Human beings don't live very long when we're stupid. The cheetah eats us or the rhinoceros gets us and we're done. Our natural condition is to acquire information and when you find that every body is stupid about something, it's that somebody is benefiting from that stupidity and they are manufacturing the stupidity. Manufacturing consent is probably further down the road than the manufacture of stupidity. So the first step, and one that I can generically recommend is that we can educate ourselves about these things. As media produces, particularly as alternative media produces, we do what we are already doing which is to give a broader context for what is happening and to try to give representative sides of the issues and so on and challenge wherever we can authority, particularly illegitimate authority. Certainly it makes absolutely no sense to sort of deny that two people can look at the same things in apparently different ways but then dismiss that person as somehow irrelevant. The important person for me in all of this is a fellow by the name of Wittgenstein. And Wittgenstein was a logician at the turn of the last century and he went into logic because of the tendency at the time to look at language, as somehow there is something wrong with language. That you couldn't really get down to the core of logic as long as you were tied to saying it in English or German or Russian or something like that. So what was necessary was a calculus of thought that was somehow stripped away from language. So all s is p and that symbolism is growing up and he was a very large part of that. But it wasn't until later in his philosophy, which I was much more attracted to, where he says "I had it wrong all along: the fact that you can lie with language is not a defect of language; that's the way it is. You don't get anything by purifying language of its very features. As a matter of fact you've made it irrelevant. The connection between the logical calculus and the way things actually are and the way people talk and think, there's no relation whatsoever. So realized that he had been on a fool's errand for twenty or thirty years of his life. That somehow purging these supposed deficiencies when the

deficiencies are what it is. Because your car is not a very good submarine is not a critique of your car, it's not meant to be a submarine. But what it means for people who use language, then, is that we have to understand that it's not a defect that people can lie and mislead and take the agency out and have false indexical and do a lot of other things with it. We have to realize that those are the rules of the game and if we don't understand that they are the rules of the game then somebody is going to be playing tricks with us and we are not going to understand it.