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## SPECIAL ISSUE ON AMERICAN INDIANS

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**MICHIGAN'S INDIANS:  
TRIBE, NATION, ESTATE, RACIAL, ETHNIC,  
OR SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP?**

by

**James A. Clifton**

"All of the above" would be an accurate if incomplete answer to this title's question: how to characterize Michigan's Indians analytically? A substantial, informative reply—one penetrating common-sense confusions, commonplace stereotypes, and conventional wisdom—needs a good many pages of description and explanation. Such an exposition must rest on a survey of the biological, social, and cultural changes that have metamorphosed the several peoples originally native to the state into today's "Indians." Only in this fashion can an illuminating clarification of "all of the above" be provided. Reader patience is required, for this is a long, complex account of not one but a half-dozen and more identity groups. A central theme in this essay will be transformation and the emergence of what is, not the persistence of what was.

**Named Identities: Tribes and Bands**

At the time of first face-to-face contact with Europeans in the early 1600s, and perhaps in the late prehistoric era, the indigenous peoples of Michigan were organized as at least six separate identity groups.<sup>1</sup> Eventually, these were identified and thereafter commonly called by the collective names: Chippewa (also spelled Ojibwa), Potawatomi, Sauk, Mascouten, Fox, and Kickapoo. The territories of two others,

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<sup>1</sup> "Identity group," meaning a named social grouping of some kind, one with a sense of belongingness, is used to avoid the deceptive confusions inherent in such conventional rubrics as "tribe" or "nation." What types of groups these were, and how they were transformed into others, will be seen.

the Ottawa and Miami, may also have overlapped the boundaries of modern Michigan in this early period, but this is less certain.<sup>2</sup>

The origins and histories of these handles for native identity groups provide some useful insights into the social-political organization of those so named, and about their developing relationships with newcomers from Europe. Of the six (or eight) modern identity group names, only two represent Frenchified (later Anglicized) corruptions of the words these peoples used to identify themselves, their native language self-names (or ethnonyms). The other group names have different histories.

These two are the Sauk (also spelled Sac, historically Saki) and Kickapoo societies. Those called Sauk by Europeans spoke of themselves as *Asakiwaki*, the "People of the Outlet" (i.e., of the Saginaw River) while *Kiikaapoa*, the "Pedestrians," is the name used for themselves by the ancestral Kickapoo.<sup>3</sup> The fact that their own self-names were adopted by Europeans to speak of these two societies is more than an interesting exception. It points to an important insight: from the earliest days onward the entire Sauk and Kickapoo populations—all their communities, regional aggregates, and other social units such as clans—were collectively called by just one name each. This and other facts suggest that at first contact the Sauk and Kickapoo were organized as independent, unitary polities, of the type anthropologists call tribal-level societies.

Among the other tribal-level societies also known by a single unitary name—someone else's name for them—are the Mascouten. What this group called themselves is not recorded. We do know that Mascouten is borrowed from a related society's language, perhaps the Fox word *Mashkotewi*, the "People of the Prairie." Here is an example of a common occurrence, the adoption by Europeans of one

native society's name for their neighbors. In any event, the people others called Mascouten disappeared before 1812, by assimilation into the ranks of their closest allies, the Kickapoo.

The popular names adopted by outsiders for the other three tribal peoples of early historic Michigan—Fox, Miami, and Potawatomi—represent different confusions and developments. Of these, the origin of Fox is simplest. When the first Frenchman met a small party from this society, he asked—probably so clumsily in a Chippewa dialect his listeners could scarcely understand him—from what group they came? The reply was something like, "We are of the Fox totem (clan)." Thus it happened a group that called itself collectively *Meshkwahkihaki*, the "Red Earths People," became commonly known by the name of one of its traditional subgroups, the Fox clan. The modern community (now in Iowa), however, still calls itself Mesquakie.<sup>4</sup>

Where the word Miami came from is not entirely certain, although it was used for some purpose by the people the French identified as such.<sup>5</sup> Here the extension of the name for a single community or subgroup to a larger sociopolitical entity was much greater than the clan-to-whole-society Fox case. Politically, the groups collectively called Miami by the French and others consisted of six independent tribal societies organized as a confederacy. Their own traditional accounts hold that their original name for themselves jointly was *Twaatwaa*, which they believed was an onomatopoeic rendering of the alarm cry of the crane. Hence the six "Miami" tribes referred to themselves as the "Crane" people.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Charles Callender, "Fox," in Bruce G. Trigger, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 15, *Northeast* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 645-46.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Callender, "Miami," in Bruce C. Trigger, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 15, *Northeast*, (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 688-89.

<sup>6</sup> If in earliest historic times any Miami occupied part of Michigan, it was a small slice of the southwestern part of the state, and only some villages from one of the six Crane People tribes were involved. The six tribes in this confederacy included the Kilatika, Mengakonkia, Pepikokia, Piankashaw, Wea, and the Atchatchakangouen (who may have formed the later so-called Miami tribe). Readers trying to pronounce these names may better appreciate why the French and others found it easier to use only Miami for all jointly.

<sup>2</sup> Michigan's modern political limits do not correspond to any native social, environmental, or ecological boundaries of the late prehistoric and early historic periods. During its early political history, at various times Michigan—as a territory—included all or parts of modern North and South Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Indiana. This essay mainly concerns only those populations indigenous to the limits of the modern state.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Callender, "Sauk," in Bruce G. Trigger, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 15, *Northeast* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 654-55, 667.

The word Potawatomi represents an even larger blunder. First named this by the French about 1634, they actually called themselves *Neshnabek*, the "People," in the sense of the true or real people.<sup>7</sup> The origin of the word Potawatomi probably reflects befuddlement in the mind of a Frenchman who completely misunderstood what was said to him. Supposedly, in long established French, English, and American traditions, the word means "Fire People," or "Keepers of the Council Fire." But no such meaning can be derived from any root or stem in their language or any related language. Nonetheless, the modern people legally defined as Potawatomi have accepted and embellished this mistaken French translation and taken it as their own.<sup>8</sup> The tiny minority of this modern group who still speak the language, however, continue to refer to themselves as *Neshnabek*.<sup>9</sup>

Known through their stories to Europeans by single, collective names—whatever the origins of or mistakes in such naming—the Potawatomi, Sauk, Fox, Mascouten, Kickapoo and Miami were from the first seen by Europeans as independent, solidary political units, tribal-level societies in modern anthropological usage. Not so for the other two indigenous peoples of Michigan, the Chippewa and Ottawa.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Long tradition has it that in the period 1621-23, Etienne Brulé, Samuel de Champlain's interpreter to and liaison with the Hurons, explored upper Lake Huron, Sault Sainte Marie, and Lake Superior. Since this tradition is not well documented, I use the 1634 date of Jean Nicolle's visit as a start point. Jean Hamelin, "Jean Nicolle," in George Brown, ed., *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1966), 1:130-33.

<sup>8</sup> As have professional historians who are reluctant to do their homework or to offend their clients. For instance, see R. David Edmunds, *The Potawatomi: Keepers of the Fire* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978), and *Kinsmen Through Time: An Annotated Bibliography of Potawatomi History* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1987). The supposed translation "Fire People" is based on what linguists politely call "folk etymology," i.e. it's dead wrong.

<sup>9</sup> See the film *Neshnabek*, available from Don Stull, Department of Anthropology, University of Kansas.

<sup>10</sup> As in the Miami instance, if any Ottawa actually occupied part of Michigan in earliest historic times, only part of them did so, perhaps along the northwestern shore of Lake Huron. The bulk of the Ottawa occupied the Manitoulin Island chain, the Bruce Peninsula, and the Canadian mainland on the east shore of Georgian Bay in the

Again, Ottawa is the easier of the two cases. The history of this word's origin and usage, however, illustrates different developments: linguistic, political, and social. The career of this word is the reverse of the extension of the name of a subunit to a larger, inclusive identity group, as with the Fox, the Miami, and, we will see, the Chippewa examples. Ottawa comes originally from a generic Algonquian word *odawa*, meaning "trader."<sup>11</sup>

Soon after the founding of New France, merchants on the St. Lawrence became heavily entangled with surrounding native peoples and their older, existing trade routes and partnerships. From them they acquired the word *Odawa*, and they applied it indiscriminately for any and all populations with whom they engaged in trade. Thus, through the seventeenth and into the early eighteenth century, the French often spoke of *les Outaouak* separately and severally, meaning groups as distant and diverse as the Algonquian Abenaki or Nippising, Michigan peoples such as the Chippewa and Sauk, Siouans such as the Winnebago, and Iroquians such as the Huron. Sometimes, to really confuse matters, the French also referred to all the above jointly as *les Outaouak*, meaning simply all those native peoples with whom they traded.

Among these many native trading peoples were those on whom the name Ottawa narrowly later devolved. At first, when the French recorded their separateness as a people, it was not the same as had happened with such unitary societies as the Fox or Potawatomi. On the contrary, they identified several distinct subgroups by different names: Kiskakon, Sinago, Sable, Nassauakueton, and others. When first contacted, these were geographically and politically separated units, although closely linked by common language and culture. Only later did the French cease using Ottawa in the generic sense of "native traders" and apply it to the Ottawa people, specifically and exclusively, as a collective handle.

The exact sociological natures of the originally separate Ottawa groups, Sinago or Sable, for instance, is unclear. They may have been

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earliest historic period.

<sup>11</sup> "Algonquian," meaning the language family. Johanna E. Feest and Christian F. Feest, "Ottawa," in Bruce G. Trigger, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 15, *Northeast* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 785.

simply local communities or regional clusters of villages (i.e., bands), or they may have been residential totemic (clan) communities. However, their original separateness is the key to understanding the differences between them (and the Chippewa, as well) and other native Michiganders further south. Unlike the tribal-level Mascouten and Miami, for example, they were organized as smaller, band-level societies. The process of identifying all separate bands by one name, Ottawa, was propelled by a sociopolitical transformation, the emergence of a larger Ottawa tribal polity.<sup>12</sup>

Because they spoke mutually intelligible dialects of the same language, the Ottawa and that closely related and even more widely dispersed people, the Chippewa, regularly used the same word as their self-name, *Anishinapek*, meaning the "Real People." This has the same significance as the cognate Potawatomi ethnonym, *Neshnabek*. The history of the emergence of the word Chippewa to refer to anything more than a single, tiny late seventeenth-century village near Sault Sainte Marie represents social and political developments different from those of the similar and closely related Ottawa, or for that matter unitary tribal peoples like the Kickapoo.

Although during the historic era the many small bands that comprised the Chippewa identity-group experienced extraordinary population and territorial expansion, unlike the Ottawa they never developed into a single, unitary tribal-level people.<sup>13</sup> For many years, anthropologists characterized the greatly dispersed Chippewa as "atomistic." This suggests, in part, their preference for living in small, widely dispersed, autonomous communities, a choice and practice that

<sup>12</sup> Some anthropologists would call this emergent Ottawa unit a "secondary tribe." That is, it was an emergent by-product of colonial, trade, and frontier conditions.

<sup>13</sup> I use the word "tribe" in the sense of a distinctive type of society, contrasting with band-level entities, chiefdoms, and states. "Tribe" is also commonly used in a cultural-linguistic sense, meaning all those groups sharing similar language and culture, regardless of their political organization. In this cultural sense, the Chippewa speaking peoples from near Ottawa, Canada to North Dakota, are sometimes called a tribe. Robert E. Ritzenthaler, "Southwestern Chippewa," in Bruce G. Trigger, ed., *The Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 15, *Northeast* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 743-59.

continues today.<sup>14</sup> Thus, originally, through their history, and today, the widely dispersed communities of Chippewa lived and operated, and live and operate, as small, independent bands which were and are the core of the many modern Chippewa reservation communities.

During the early period of exploration and trade, the French did not identify, name, or recognize an overall Chippewa social-political entity. On the contrary, for many years they consistently distinguished and dealt with small band communities, which they recorded under such names as *Amik* "Beaver," *Manamek* "Catfish," *Nikik* "Otter," or *Nokke* "Bear."<sup>15</sup> These were likely organized as residential clans.<sup>16</sup> Only after trade and political relationships had been firmly established with these tiny communities, which in process began to transform them, did a common name for larger aggregations of Chippewa band communities emerge. Borrowing at first from that people's own language the meaning of the word *pawittik*, "rapids," and rendering this in French, the French soon began calling some of these bands, gathered and living near Sault Sainte Marie, *les Saulteaux* (Anglicized as *Saulteur*), the "People of the Sault."<sup>17</sup>

Some decades later *Saulteur* dropped out of use in and near Michigan, and was replaced by the name of one of these small communities, *Ochipwe*, which was transformed into the current Chippewa/Ojibwa usage.<sup>18</sup> *Ochipwe* means "puckered up" (i.e., a type of moccasin seam), and so the local name of a village of less than

<sup>14</sup> Victor Barnouw, *Acculturation and Personality Among the Wisconsin Chippewa* (Menasha, WI: American Anthropological Association, 1950), and A. Irving Hallowell, *Culture and Experience* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1955).

<sup>15</sup> E. S. Rogers, "Southeastern Ojibwa," in Bruce G. Trigger, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 15, *Northeast* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 768-70.

<sup>16</sup> Clans are named unilineal—here patrilineal—descent groups, with corporate identities and property, and with various social, economic, and ritual functions.

<sup>17</sup> Later use of "Saulteur," sometimes spelled phonetically as *Soxo*, may confuse. The word has remained in use until today, not for the Chippewa living near the Sault Sainte Marie, but for those who emigrated into present Manitoba.

<sup>18</sup> These are alternative spellings of the same native word. Chippewa has been more commonly used in the United States, Ojibwa or Ojibway in Canada.

one hundred souls was generalized as a name for tens of thousands of related people who, in their own language, continued to call themselves *Anishinapek*. And some years later a similar process also extended the name of one small village on the northern end of Lake Huron, *Misesogu*, "River With Several Outlets," as Mississauga, which became a collective name for numerous small *Anishinapek* bands in southeastern Michigan and the Ontario Peninsula.<sup>19</sup>

Together, Michigan's native peoples spoke neither the same nor eight separate languages. Instead, they used dialects of four distinct, mutually intelligible vernaculars: Ojibwa-Ottawa, Sauk-Fox-Kickapoo-Mascouten, Miami-Illinois, and Potawatomi.<sup>20</sup> With the exception of Potawatomi, each was spoken by several politically independent tribal- or band-level societies. All are more or less closely related to one another; they are descended from a single distant, ancestral language; and, together with others such as Menomoni and Shawnee, they are called the Central Algonquian subfamily, although this is a regional rather than a genetic aggregate.

#### Group Identities: Indigenous Perspectives

This emphasis on language is significant for understanding the traditional bases of group identity among Michigan's eight indigenous peoples. On meeting strangers, they did not ask: "From what tribe, race, class, ethnic group, town, or nation do you come?" Such named categories of people were either entirely unknown or of little or no significance to peoples such as the Ottawa and Fox. Instead, their standard identity question was: "What language do you speak?" Language, in this way, was a prime marker of group identity. So,

<sup>19</sup> Following government practice, scholars today use these names for the dispersed major regional groupings of the *Anishinapek*. Chippewa/Ojibwa is used for the Southwestern communities (e.g. of Wisconsin, Minnesota, and the Upper Peninsula, and adjacent parts of Canada); Mississauga for the Southeastern groups; Saulteur for the Northern communities of Manitoba, and a fourth, Bungee, for the Plains Ojibwa of Saskatchewan and North Dakota. To these we must add, as well, the Nipissing and Algonquin communities of Ontario and Quebec, who also spoke the same language and called themselves *Anishinapek*.

<sup>20</sup> Ives Goddard, "Central Algonquian Languages," in Bruce G. Trigger, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 15, *Northeast* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 583-85.

customarily, native groups were distinguished from one another by language or dialect.

In this period, speaking Potawatomi contrasted with speaking Chippewa, or Sauk with Miami, and set such speakers off as distinct from one another. Skipping over nearly four centuries of extraordinary changes in the lives of these people, today both Michigan Potawatomi and Ottawa commonly say, about using their native languages, that they are "speaking Indian." So, in the modern world, using *any* native language marks the speaker as "Indian" in contrast to everyone else, particularly those whose native language is English.

During the first century of contact, the several indigenous groups in Michigan did not think of or identify themselves jointly as "Indian," "Redmen," or any of the several other European synonyms for New World native peoples.<sup>21</sup> These proudly independent peoples had no sense of shared identity or purpose. Neither did any of them speak of the various groups of Europeans they dealt with by any all-inclusive word such as "Whiteman."<sup>22</sup> On the contrary, they identified, categorized, named, and spoke of several varieties of European peoples. None of these names indicate any interest in or concern with skin-color, which—reflecting a persistent European-American confusion of biology and culture—later became a European (and a modern Indian) fixation.

Michigan's native peoples distinguished between and named several varieties of newcomers. Struck by their facial hair, they called the French the "Bearded Ones," while *Sakonosh* was what they called Britons (later, Anglo-Canadians).<sup>23</sup> *Postonnene*, "Boston Men," was

<sup>21</sup> The English, at first, commonly used words such as the Naturals, Virginians, and Tawneys before adopting Christopher Columbus's *Indio* for the many peoples later called "Indian." The French frequently used *les sauvages*. Some modern writers are prone to misrepresent the meaning of *Savage* as used centuries ago for purposes of moralizing. For the French, it had about the same signification as the English Naturals, meaning unpolished, untamed or undomesticated. Through the 1700s, *les sauvages* did not carry its modern meaning of brutal or violent.

<sup>22</sup> For that matter, neither did Europeans use "Whites" in this early period—racial labels and categories had yet to become accepted. If anything, they were more apt to speak of themselves as Christians, in contrast to New World heathens.

<sup>23</sup> *Sakonosh* is an untranslatable pan-Algonquian form. It may well have been a loan word, originally borrowed from the Scots-Irish *Sassanach*, meaning "Englishman."

attached to New Englanders. Sometimes also struck, certainly much impressed by their large edged-weapons, they distinguished frontier Americans from Virginia and Kentucky by the name *Kitchimokomon*, "Big Knives." Michigan's modern Indians, who have long since absorbed American racial categories and thinking, will say that *Kitchimokomon* means Whiteman. It did not originally; and it does not etymologically.

### Identities: Analytic Perspectives

Michigan's six (or eight) native societies formed two broad classes in terms of their social organization, culture, subsistence economies, and technologies. These central characteristics had important consequences for their divergent later histories. The northernmost class includes the Chippewa and Ottawa, and in terms of numbers of people involved, it was the lesser or secondary configuration. The dominant, geographically more widespread and southernmost pattern includes the Sauk, Fox, Kickapoo, Mascouten, Miami, and Potawatomi.<sup>24</sup> Of these, Potawatomi culture was in a sense transitional, indicating their late arrival (probably before 1500) in Michigan from north of Sault Sainte Marie.<sup>25</sup>

A central feature of the dominant configuration dispels one of the most common and persistent stereotypes about "the Indian." At the time of first contact, like most other native peoples in the United States, native Michiganders were primarily farmers, not hunters. The Potawatomi, Sauk, Fox, Mascouten, Kickapoo and Miami all practiced and relied heavily on the cultivation of the "Mexican Trinity": maize, beans, and squash. For these societies hunting, fishing, and gathering wild foods was important but secondary to their annual harvests.

<sup>24</sup> Charles Callender, "Great-Lakes Riverine Sociopolitical Organization," in Bruce G. Trigger, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 15, *Northeast* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 610-12.

<sup>25</sup> James A. Clifton, *Hurons of the West: Migrations and Adaptations of the Ontario Iroquoians, 1650-1704* (Ottawa, ON: National Museum of Man, 1977); Clifton, *The Prairie People: Continuity and Change in Potawatomi Indian Culture, 1665-1965* (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1977); and Clifton, "Potawatomi," in Bruce G. Trigger, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 15, *Northeast* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 725-42.

Moreover, the food-gathering Chippewa and Ottawa to the north obtained most of their subsistence not from hunting but from fishing and gathering such productive cereals as wild rice.

In the technical language of anthropology, the six food-producing societies of early Michigan, like all other New World farmers, were horticulturists not agriculturists. The distinction is important in understanding their accomplishments and the nature of their social life.<sup>26</sup>

Agriculture, unknown in the entire New World, is an improved development on earlier horticulture. The difference is critical: horticulture relies entirely on human muscle-power to produce food; agriculture supplements human-power with that of domesticated animals, wind, water, and (only recently) manufactured sources of energy. The former was independently invented in the New World as well as other locales; agriculture and domesticated animals were introduced by late-arriving peoples from Europe.

To be more exact, the peoples of the dominant, southernmost configuration in Michigan relied for most of their food production on the labor of women. Sauk or Potawatomi men were not entirely absent from the cornfields: they carried much responsibility for the heavy work of slashing and burning the trees and brush covering new fields, but the burdens of work thereafter in planting, tilling, and harvesting fell on women. Because of their vital contributions to the native economy, the position and influence of women among the Sauk, Fox, Potawatomi, Mascouten, Kickapoo, and Miami was relatively higher and greater than was true of the foraging Chippewa and Ottawa bands. However, all eight societies were fundamentally patrilineal in basic social organization. None had developed the emergent matrilineal institutions of their related neighbors to the southeast, the Ohio Shawnee.

The two northern, foraging, band-level societies concentrated in larger groups only seasonally, in summer near prime fishing sites. The balance of the year they lived scattered in smaller family and extended

<sup>26</sup> Some writers are prone to ignore this distinction and characterize these peoples as agriculturists, thinking that calling them horticulturists is somehow insulting. This represents an ethnocentric misconception, based on the general association of horticulture with modern recreational gardening. Michigan's native peoples farmed for anything but amusement; and the high civilizations of the Americas in Central and South America were based on horticulture.

kin groups. In contrast, the Sauk, Fox, Mascouten, Miami, Kickapoo and Potawatomi lived in larger population aggregates, spending more of the year in substantial, semipermanent villages near their cornfields in which they had invested so much time and effort. Because, like other New World food producers, they did not fertilize their fields, these tribal farmers periodically had to shift the sites of their increasingly less fertile farm plots and of their nearby villages. The substantial (sometimes palisaded) villages of these tribal peoples were commonly located in forest openings, small-prairie lands adjacent to a waterway.

The northern and southern configurations were also distinguished by the technology of transportation. The Chippewa and Ottawa bands, oriented to fishing and intensive use of waterways and long-distance river and lake travel, were skilled makers and users of the famous light-weight, framed-up birchbark canoe. Not so the tribal farmers to the south. For water travel they relied mainly on heavier, much less portable dug-outs. These tribal people were quickly identified by the French as "great pedestrians," much admired for their capacity for overland travel by shanks mare.

As mentioned, the Potawatomi, being late-comers into the southern parts of Michigan, represent something of a mixed case. For example, they continued the manufacture and use of bark canoes, as did their former Chippewa neighbors; but they also soon adopted the practice of maize horticulture and sedentary village living of their new neighbors, such as the Sauk.

#### Transformations: Political-Economic Entanglements

Throughout the colonial and early national eras in Michigan, none of these contrasting characteristics remained entirely constant, nor did the locations of these peoples. All eight societies, sooner or later, became heavily involved in the fur trade, which quickly transformed their lives in many ways. First to be intensively involved were the Ottawa and Chippewa, but the southernmost tribes quickly followed them. In process, some *Anishinapek* later moved into southeastern Michigan along Swan Creek and the Black River, becoming known, together with the Saginaw Bay communities, as the Missisauga. There they adopted horticulture, as did the many Ottawa who eventually settled northwest of the Grand River and in northwest Ohio. Some among the southern tribes adopted the use of bark canoes to facilitate

their participation in the fur trade, but as late as the 1680s, the Miami, for instance, were still dependent on others for long distance water-taxi service.

Due to their heavy involvement in the fur trade and their increasing entanglements with the colonial rivalries of France and Britain, all eight societies also experienced extraordinary technological, economic, political, biological, cultural, and social changes. All these sources and kinds of change interacted together, synergistically, to work fundamental alterations of their basic patterns of living and social relationships.

In technology, all indigenous Michiganders soon developed new wants for, and eventually profound dependency on, products manufactured in Europe. Early on, these ranged from durable goods, such as iron and steel tools or weapons and cooking utensils, to consumables, including woven cloth, jewelry, beads, and an increasingly large inventory of many other imported items. As European market-oriented economies developed and ever new kinds of instant consumables were brought into production, Michigan's native peoples were introduced to them. One such was alcoholic beverages (early called "French milk," meaning mother's milk, not cow's), previously unknown to indigenous peoples, which sometimes resulted in chemical dependency and grave social problems. Another, interestingly, was the introduction of refined sugar, at first called "French Snow" by the first to savor it. A new taste for empty-calorie sweets, and the recognition that its production and sale to European-Americans could be profitable, later led to extensive maple sugar extraction, using European-introduced methods and technology.<sup>27</sup>

Economic entanglements with Europeans were of many kinds and consequences over the centuries. Involvement in the fur trade meant that Michigan's natives, who had first traded furs for new goods following their own older reciprocal exchange customs—where social relationships established by such exchanges were more important than unit values or striking a "good deal"—became a sort of frontier

<sup>27</sup> It turns out that maple sugar production was invented and introduced to Native peoples by immigrants in New England. This is not an ancient North American practice, as was once commonly supposed. Carol Mason, "A Sweet Small Something: Maple Sugaring in the New World," in James A. Clifton, ed., *The Invented Indians: Cultural Fictions and Government Policies* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1990), 91-106.



proletariat. Increasingly, they were seasonally preoccupied with taking and processing furs for European markets.

Because the fur trade operated on a credit system, they were introduced to heavy debts, in autumn collecting goods and supplies from French or British traders in advance of the furs they were obligated to deliver come spring. Because the European trade system operated on unfamiliar supply-and-demand principles, the native producers soon experienced boom-and-bust cycles. Because the lucrative fur trade was a major focus of French-British colonial rivalries, they periodically experienced shortages of new goods caused by blockade or war, and increasingly they were directly involved as military allies or enemies of imperial powers and their native confederates.

Because unregulated taking of fur-bearing animals had caused their near extermination in the lands of other native societies dependent on the trade, early in the 1640s Michigan's peoples became the targets of rampaging brigades of warriors from eastern, Iroquoian societies, which, by the 1660s, had caused the near depopulation in the Lower Peninsula. Starting in the 1820s, when the fur trade collapsed entirely, and as they ceded their hunting and farming lands to Americans, Michigan's native peoples were left economically dependent and destitute of means of satisfying their wants. Why did Michigan's indigenous peoples, asked Territorial Governor Lewis Cass, so readily assent to treaties with the United States selling their lands? Because they were "poor and naked," was his much experienced answer.<sup>28</sup>

Despite three centuries of experience with the logic of a market economy and money, however, the ethic of reciprocal exchange proved extraordinarily durable for some. As late as the 1930s, the small Potawatomi communities still in southwestern Michigan engaged in such exchanges with their American neighbors. Operating as a cottage industry they produced, for instance, large quantities of utilitarian baskets. That recently, they annually supplied Notre Dame University with all the waste, garbage, laundry, and market containers the

<sup>28</sup> Walter Lowrie and Matthew St. Clair Clark, eds., *American State Papers—Indian Affairs* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1832-1834) 2:683-84; Clifton, *The Prairie People*, 179-80; Clifton, "Hurons of the West," 179-80; and Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

institution needed, in ritualized exchange for meals and food to carry home.<sup>29</sup>

Politically, Michigan's indigenous communities were also greatly affected by involvements with Europeans and the changing nature of their world. Confronted with important new issues and decisions to make, styles of community governance changed. New types of political leaders emerged and traditional leadership roles were altered, as traders favored one leader or community over another or as colonial authorities rewarded some and antagonized others.<sup>30</sup> Since younger men were mainly responsible for collecting furs, and were also important in colonial wars, their prestige and influence increased. Pressed to become political clients and dependencies of France or Great Britain, the native societies alternately accommodated themselves diplomatically, resisted militarily, or succumbed. A band-level society, the Ottawa developed tribal institutions, while well-organized tribal peoples such as the Potawatomi and Kickapoo were eventually broken up into smaller, widely dispersed and politically separate groups. Ultimately, they were absorbed into the new American nation and its Territory and State of Michigan, which in the end made them all citizens, in the unique new status of "Indian," whether as individuals or organized communities.

#### Transformation: Dislocation and Dispersal

Perhaps the most devastating political experience of Michigan's peoples came early, starting about 1641. Within two decades all had become refugees, driven out of their lands by invading Iroquois bent on territorial conquest. By about 1665, the Lower Peninsula was nearly depopulated, villages abandoned or burned, cornfields in weeds. Almost the entire population had fled west to a refuge area in northern Wisconsin, joined by other native refugees in flight from the

<sup>29</sup> This was classic reciprocal exchange, not market mentality bartering: no one involved so much as mentioned the relative value of the baskets or foodstuffs exchanged. Each party gave what they could. James A. Clifton, *The Pokagons, 1683-1983: Catholic Potawatomi Indians of the St. Joseph River Valley* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), 116-17.

<sup>30</sup> James G.E. Smith, *Leadership Among the Southwestern Ojibwa, Publications in Ethnology* 7 (Ottawa, ON: National Museum of Man, 1973).

Ontario Peninsula, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. There they remained for several decades until they had recouped their strength, organized themselves, and—joining forces with their French allies—made Michigan and neighboring areas unsafe for invading Iroquois warriors and fur trappers.

As a result of these dislocations and of their later recovery and return, the human landscape of Michigan changed dramatically. Some of Michigan's original identity groups, such as the Sauk, Fox, Kickapoo, and Mascouten, returned but temporarily. During the 1700s they began resettling elsewhere, eventually in places as distant as Iowa, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, and Mexico. The Mascouten by 1812 entirely disappeared as a separate identifiable community, by assimilation into the ranks of the Kickapoo. Many newly called Chippewa, expanding greatly in population, settled the whole of the Upper and parts of the northern portion of the Lower Peninsula, as did the newly named Missisauga southeast of Saginaw Bay and the Ottawa north of the Grand River. Many but not all Potawatomi returned to southwestern Michigan; others remained in northeast Wisconsin and more spread into Indiana and Illinois. The Miami returnees proved temporary sojourners. Perhaps pushed by the Potawatomi, they soon moved south into the Wabash River Valley.

To complicate matters further, from time to time between 1694 and 1843, numerous other native peoples from the east, southeast, and even west camped or temporarily made their homes in Michigan. Early on, these included small groups of *Wabanaki* and *Postonnene* (i.e., "Boston Men")—"Eastern Indians" whose tribal origins cannot always easily be identified, some of whom settled among and intermarried with resident communities. Later, most of the surviving Ontario Iroquoians—Hurons (later called Wyandot) and Petuns—spent years living in Michigan before moving elsewhere,<sup>31</sup> and there was a small Huron village near Detroit until the early 1840s.

At any one time during the 1700s and through the 1830s, a traveler might likely encounter here or there individuals, small groups, or communities of Illinois, Osage, Cherokee, Delaware, New York

<sup>31</sup> Clifton, *The Prairie People*; Clifton, "Hurons of the West"; and Clifton, "The Re-emergent Wyandot: a Study of Ethnogenesis on the Detroit River Borderland, 1747," in K.G. Pryke and L.L. Kulisek, eds., *The Western District* (Windsor, ON: Essex County Historical Society, 1983).

Iroquois and many other transients briefly visiting or staying in Michigan. Not until the end of the French Regime, after 1768, did a durable outline of major tribal settlements and territories in Michigan start emerging, such as the first American settlers encountered a few decades later.<sup>32</sup> When all this historical dust settled, Michigan's Indian country was occupied by the same major groups as today—Chippewa, Ottawa, and Potawatomi. However, during the twentieth century, to these have been added a free-floating, generic, mainly urban "Indian" population of a wide mix of tribal, other ethnic, or racial antecedents.

### Transformation: Cultural, Social, and Biological Change

Many extensive cultural changes accompanied these technological, economic, and political transformations. Michigan's native peoples had first to accommodate themselves symbolically to the mere existence and significance of European newcomers and to develop understandings about them. Reflexively, they also had to accommodate themselves to Europe's ideas and images about, and their plans for, indigenous peoples. In short order, European figures, practices, and things started appearing in "traditional" legends and myths. In process, native peoples had to revise or reinvent their concepts about themselves, their place in the world order, the nature of the world, and their future.

Such cultural changes included everything from European loanwords in native languages, to the mastery of unfamiliar languages, to confronting whole new sets of symbols, to dealing with new religious rites and cosmology.<sup>33</sup> Nothing in the belief systems of Michigan's

<sup>32</sup> For an overview and for many of the finer details of these complex historical-geographic changes, readers might peruse the historical maps and text in Helen Hornbeck Tanner, ed., *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press for the Newberry Library, 1987).

<sup>33</sup> For some glimpses of transformations in religious institutions, ideology, and behavior, see James A. Clifton, "From Shaman to Medicine Men: Transformation of Shamanic Roles and Styles in the Upper Great Lakes Region," in Jane S. Day and Gary Seaman, eds., *Ancient Traditions: Shamanism in Central Asia and the Americas*, (Boulder: University Press of Colorado and Denver Museum of Natural History, 1994), 187-207; James A. Clifton, "Pioneer Advocates of Methodism Among the Lake Superior Chippewa," in Elizabeth Brusco and Laura Klein, eds., *The Message in the Missionary*:

natives remained unaffected, and many older elements disappeared to be replaced by elements directly borrowed or entirely invented to fit new patterns of living and being. Decay in or loss of older cultural elements was paralleled by much innovation and adaptation. Among these cultural transformations was the understanding that, vis-à-vis all Europeans, the Chippewa, Ottawa, and Potawatomi had become "Indians"—a new word, idea, and status. This symbolic identification between these groups was fostered by the development of common interests, coalitions, and strategies for dealing with incursions by Europeans.

Several established native social institutions interacted with the presence of Europeans to produce dramatic biological as well as social transformations among Michigan's native populations. For many decades, the only French, Britons, and Americans Michigan's Indians met and dealt with were males. Through the 1700s Chippewa or Ottawa, for instance, rarely if ever saw a French or a Scots woman. When this happened it was briefly, at a distance, while visiting French or English towns in the east. Later, contacts with a few European women increased somewhat, but still at much social distance, for example, with the occasional Protestant missionary wife or mission teacher working in their villages. In contrast, from the very first European contacts onward, the social (and physical) relations between Potawatomi or Mississauga men and women and European men were close, lasting, and had strikingly transformative effects: biologically, culturally, and socially.

These processes of change were facilitated by how Michigan's Indian males, from the very first encounter onward, constructed their dealings with French males, the early famed *coureurs des bois* and, once the fur trade was fully established, the later *voyageurs*. For Ottawa and Potawatomi fathers and brothers, their unmarried daughters and sisters had long been valuable in fostering political-economic relationships with outsiders. These Indian men customarily delivered their young women to men from other native communities as spouses, with reciprocal delivery of women from other tribes coming

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*Local Interpretations of Religious Ideology and Missionary Personality, Studies in Third World Societies*, Publication 50 (Williamsburg, VA: College of William and Mary, 1994), 115-41; and James A. Clifton, "Avocational Medicine Men: Inventive 'Traditions' and New Age Religiosity Among Western Great Lakes Algonquians," in Marie Mauzé, ed., *Transactions of the 14th European Indian Workshop* (forthcoming, 1995).

sooner or later. Because the most fundamental logic of social relationships in all Michigan's tribes was kinship, in this fashion the men cemented new or reinforced old relationships by converting outsiders into kinsmen—brothers-in-law.<sup>34</sup> The delivery of valuable women, in the perspective of these Indian fathers, was intended to make outsiders perpetually obligated to them. In this fashion, with women as tokens, Chippewa or Sauk men soon tried to entangle Frenchmen in their nets of duty and responsibility. Few Frenchmen are known to have declined such overtures.

However, under these new circumstances, the traditional balance of reciprocal exchange did not obtain. The French fur trapper or trader, for example, at first had no sister or daughter to deliver in courteous and diplomatic return to a Chippewa husband (this changed as generations passed). And there is some doubt that these French or English men with kin elsewhere would have considered doing so, or that they would have been able to do so, given the objections of their women and their original communities to such practices. In this manner, the traditional symmetrical exchange of women worked out asymmetrically in dealings with the French and Scots-Irish, one of the earliest indications these Indians had of their inferior status in the eyes of Europe.

Another native organizational fact that greatly affected how Indian groups reacted to such Indian Woman/European Man liaisons involved the fundamental nature of their social system. The Potawatomi, Ottawa, and Chippewa were strongly *patrilineal* societies, and the basic unit of their structure was the totemic collective (or patriclan). All these societies were organized as a set of named, mutually exclusive, corporate membership groups or clans, which had major ritual, economic, political and other responsibilities. A person's very social identity, personal name, and most important life-long social relationships came from being lodged as a member of a clan: the Great Sea, or Wolf, or Beaver clans, for instance. And membership in a clan was inherited in the paternal line, through one's father and father's father.

There was a customary alternative to such "biological recruitment." This involved "social recruitment," through a formal, public process of ritual adoption. Such adoption rituals, in Potawatomi or Ottawa thinking, invoked supernatural powers of such strength that the

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<sup>34</sup> Affinal, rather than consanguinal kin, in the terminology of social anthropology.

fundamental psychosocial nature of adoptees was utterly transformed. Socially and psychologically, they became someone else, with a new name and identity, usually, that of a deceased clan-ancestor. In this manner, these tribes recognized and practiced a form of ritualized assimilation of aliens.

Following the logic of this social-cultural system out, it will be plain that the offspring of, say, a Frenchman or an Anglo-Briton by a Chippewa woman had no automatic place in Chippewa society. They were not considered fully Chippewa by Chippewa or, to the extent the word meant anything at all to the natives, Indians, because they were not clan members born. This was so because their fathers were not ordinarily themselves, for instance, Great Sea or Wolf clan members. These Indians classified such children and their fathers as and called them "relatives-in-law," not *nikdodem* "clan-mate."

Of course, a French man or a Briton could become formally assimilated through the ritual adoption process, and some undoubtedly did so. But over the next two centuries an increasing number of alien males lived in (or near to) but they were not of the Ottawa or Potawatomi communities where they had taken wives, fostered children, and from which they obtained their livelihoods.

#### Transformation: The People In Between

This process of biological amalgamation without full assimilation or identity transformation of such marginal people started with the arrival of the first French males in 1634 or soon thereafter and continued for near two centuries. In these years only a rare European woman, usually a captive taken in raids against English colonial settlements, was assimilated and married into a Chippewa or Ottawa community. Only in the early 1800s did the first Anglo-Canadian or American woman by choice take an Indian husband, and this did not become commonplace until the twentieth century. By then, the complexions, ancestries, and social relations of Michigan's Indians had been greatly transformed.

In these two early centuries the flow of European males into associations with Michigan Indian communities and their women continued unabated. The first few unlicensed French trappers, the *coureurs des bois*, were followed by many more *voyageurs*, once the fur trade became better organized. Following them came other males: explorers, soldiers, government officials, craftsmen, journalists, travel

writers, missionaries, and the first proper settlers. It was the rare Frenchman or Scot among this stream of alien males staying near an Indian community more than a few days who failed, temporarily or for a longer term, to follow what was known as "the custom of the country," by taking an Indian woman as consort or wife.

After the first generation of such interbreeding these "Indian" wives (and their brothers) were often the children, then the grandchildren and great grandchildren and beyond, of the earliest intermarriages. Again, in the eyes of the Ottawa or Chippewa, these people lacking a male parent who was a clan member were not counted locally as *Anishinapek*. They were identified as affinal kinfolk who lived on the fringes of Indian society. But neither were they fully accepted on the other side as legitimate French, English, or Americans. Through the processes of ethnogenesis they had become a new people of ambiguous status, a "People in Between."<sup>35</sup>

This process of ethnogenesis did not carry forward to the formation of distinctive, separate communities of these marginal folk in the United States as it did in Manitoba's Red River *Métis* society. In the United States such groups persisted on the fringes of Indian communities only so long as did the fur trade, whose business they managed locally. They were an occupational sub-culture, and when their occupation disappeared, so did they, as did the itinerant cathedral builders of medieval Europe. In their last years of prominence, during the American treaty era (in Michigan beginning in 1795 and ending 1864), they remained influential, conducting much of the business of treaty and commercial management, serving both Indians and Americans. Yet so long as they existed they had to be fitted somehow into American social categories, the structure of thinking about other peoples.

Soon after the appearance of the first generation of French male/Chippewa female offspring, the French began calling this new people *Brules*, "Burned Ones," after their somewhat darker complex-

<sup>35</sup> Bruce R. Morrison and C. Roderick Wilson, *Native Peoples: The Canadian Experience* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986), 375-403; Jacqueline L. Peterson, *The People In-Between: Indian-White Marriage and the Genesis of a Métis Society and Culture in the Great Lakes Region, 1680-1830* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1981); and Peterson, "Ethnogenesis: the Settlement and Growth of a New People in the Great Lakes Region, 1702-1815," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 6 (1982): 23-64.

ions, and later and more commonly, *métis*, which has the same literal sense as the Spanish *mestizo* or the English mixed-blood. In American English, until about 1838, the words "half-blood" or "half-breed" were ordinarily used as a name for these marginal people. At that time it became apparent to American officials in Washington that these people were no longer commonly "half" of anything, when individuals and families who were demonstrably no more than one-eighth or one-sixteenth Chippewa or Ottawa began demanding a share of the payments and lands set aside for "half-breeds." It was then that the words "mixed-blood," or "Indians-by-blood," were substituted.

As an occupational group, this culturally marginal folk worked between Indian suppliers and European traders, and later between tribal land owners and American treaty negotiators. Usually multilingual, familiar with Indian customs, politics, and leaders, they also were socialized in European business values, and were commonly literate, so they could control the flow of communications between the increasingly subordinated tribes and American officialdom. It was the rare American treaty in this era where the *Métis* were not heavily involved, and not well rewarded by payments from funds awarded the Indians for their lands. But with the passing of the fur trade, and the approaching end of the treaty-making process in sight during the early 1850s, the precarious status of these in-between people became entirely untenable, and so they melted away as an identifiable group.

A good many of them migrated socially—assimilating informally into American communities, taking up new occupations and professions. But many more traveled socially in the other direction, assimilating into tribal communities. By one device or another, they managed to get themselves officially recognized as Indians of one tribe or another, which provided security of a different sort. In modern parlance, some of these became ethnic double-dippers; and tribal leaders as well as local American officials during the 1840s complained about their machinations in just such terms. When it suited their purposes they were Indian; when land was awarded to half-breeds, they were such; when it was more valuable to be Americans, they were local citizens loyal to one or another national political party.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>36</sup> This is a Great Lakes region example of the well-known phenomenon of alternating, multiple, or selective ethnic identity. For a theoretical discussion and a selection of biographic studies, see James A. Clifton, ed., *Being and Becoming Indian*:

In this way, since 1634 or so the biological antecedents of Michigan's "Indians" have been transformed. In the semantic beginning, when Christopher Columbus coined the word in 1492, "Indian" had a purely geographic sense, meaning only all those diverse peoples who inhabited the American continents. A word and idea entirely unknown to the native peoples, as was any sense of common identity or purpose, over the centuries when new social arrangements evolved this idiom took on entirely different meanings. The new meanings of "Indian" fitted the emerging system of categories of diverse peoples located inside the larger, more complex, heavily stratified, all-embracing social systems developing in North America. Eventually Indian became the name of a socially defined "race" and a collection of ethnicities.

#### Transformation: Processes of Incorporation

Recently, some sociologists and anthropologists have begun thinking of some associated processes as involving the incorporation of native peoples into larger settler societies of mainly European origin, and into the orbit of European-American power politics and economic systems.<sup>37</sup> This "incorporation" theory is intended as an improvement over earlier acculturation/assimilation, dependency, and world systems thinking. Following the outline of incorporation theory, we can summarize important aspects of how Michigan's native peoples were transformed between 1634 and 1991.

In the beginning—in 1634—Michigan was inhabited by six or eight entirely independent identity groups organized as tribal- and band-level societies. Each of these societies was involved in economic, political, and social relationships with other native peoples, near and distant. Demographically, the antecedents of the whole populations of each society were native in origin. This is not to say that in each *Neshnabek* or *Kiikaapoa* community all members had exclusively *Neshnabek* or *Kiikaapoa* ancestors, not by any means. Each such society and

*Biographic Studies of North American Frontiers* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1993).

<sup>37</sup> Thomas D. Hall, "Incorporated in the World System: Toward a Critique," *American Sociological Review* 51 (1986): 390-402, and Hall, *Social Change in the Southwest* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989).

community included people and ancestors from other indigenous societies. Aliens who had been fully assimilated through adoption rituals were one such category. Wives from other indigenous communities were another, as were captives taken in raids, voluntary immigrants, and visitors. Internally, aside from age, gender, kin group, and rank differences, there was little of any other sort of social stratification. Certainly, what social scientists recognize as social class (or horizontal stratification) and ethnicity or race (vertical stratification) were absent.

When Michigan's native peoples and the French were drawn into relationships with one another—at first of an economic and then quickly, of a social and political nature—this changed. This was the start of the incorporation process, but for many years the relationships involved mutual political-economic interdependency and were relatively well balanced in practice.<sup>38</sup> Michigan's native peoples were then known to the French as *Sauvages*, who began thinking of them as a singular social entity, notwithstanding recognized differences.

As described in this period, because of intermarriages between French males and native women there emerged the first generation of an entirely new identity group, who would soon become known as the *Métis*. These Franco-Indians were the first proper new ethnic group—characterized by distinctive sociocultural features as well as by political-economic status—to emerge in the region. But their history was a short one. In process, because of interbreeding and new relationships, the demographic nature of the native populations started changing. While their autonomy was somewhat qualified, these native groups remained largely in control of their own decision making. Yet they were so far out on the periphery of influence and interest that they were only weakly incorporated into the European system.

With the appearance of Britons into the region this changed rapidly. The French were never to any degree as given to extensive and expanding settlement, land acquisition, and agricultural development as were Anglo-Saxons and Scots-Irish. Those who dealt with Michigan's native peoples were almost entirely male, as were the Britons for some years. But soon English-speaking people began

<sup>38</sup> This is the fundamental meaning of "middle ground," as used and fully detailed in Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

arriving in family groups. Moreover, as French-British imperial rivalries developed, especially over control of land for capital development and settlement, the native peoples were drawn ever closer into the orbit of the European political-economic system. Nonetheless, even through the half-century following the British conquest of New France, Michigan's peoples occupied a distinctive political niche. Together with neighboring tribes, as potential allies or antagonists of European rivals, they represented a balance of power, a position they skillfully manipulated by playing one party off against the other.

Like the French before them, starting about 1765 the first Britons to appear in numbers in Michigan were mainly males involved in the fur-trade, or in military-administrative work. Also like the French, they followed the "custom of the country," taking what they called "Indian" wives or consorts. By then, a great many of these "Indian" women were descendants of the first French to follow this practice. Hence, the demographic profile of Michigan's native peoples changed ever more rapidly. To people of Franco-Ottawa ancestry, for instance, were now added people of Franco-Anglo-Chippewa and other mixed pedigrees.

In this period, we can see the first real institutionalization of horizontal stratification, of social class, at a major fur-trade center such as Michilimackinac, for instance, or at colonial-administrative centers such as Detroit.<sup>39</sup> In such complex, multi-function communities we can recognize several distinctive, economically layered categories of people by about 1800. English-speaking owner-proprietors and French-Canadian agent-managers, together with British administrators, missionaries, and military officers forming an elite strata was one. Next to them hierarchically were the *Métis*, some of whom formed a rudimentary middle class of clerks, interpreters, and agents, others a laboring class hewing wood, drawing water, and transporting goods. Beneath them, in the eyes of the elite and incipient middle class, were the people now firmly identified as "Indians." They still functioned as primary producers in the fur trade, but they were increasingly dominated and exploited, and outside the British-French managed

<sup>39</sup> James M. McClurken, "Augustin Hamlin, Jr.: Ottawa Identity and the Politics of Ottawa Persistence," in Clifton, *Being and Becoming Indian*, 82-111.

social system. By now, Indians in Michigan were drawn firmly into the margins of the European managed political-economic system, as an emergent ethnic or racial group.

This British colonial dominated system lasted less than a half-century. It was first only modestly qualified by the American Revolution, when Michigan under international law in 1787 became part of American territory. But this new nation's practical power was insufficient to effectively control most of Michigan economically or politically, until the War of 1812 ended.

During the American Revolution and through the War of 1812, most of Michigan's Indian communities served their political interests by allying themselves with Great Britain against the United States. In those years, their communities were also involved in two major outbreaks of frontier warfare. The first of these began in 1784, resulted in two major defeats by Indians of American armies, and ended only in the final defeat of the "Western Indian Confederacy" at Fallen Timbers in 1794. The second, associated with the names of two Shawnee leaders, the brothers Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa (the Prophet), erupted in 1811, merged with the War of 1812, and again ended in defeat in 1814.<sup>40</sup>

### Incorporation By Treaty

These resistance movements were the last episodes of organized warfare involving Michigan's Indians against the United States. The earliest of these was precipitated by the first efforts of Americans to acquire land in Ohio, first by "right of conquest," then through negotiated purchase following peace with Great Britain in 1783.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Clifton, *The Prairie People*, 131-246; R. David Edmunds, *The Shawnee Prophet* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983); John Sugden, *Tecumseh's Last Stand* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985); and Wiley Sword, *President Washington's Indian War: The Struggle for the Old Northwest, 1790-1795* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987).

<sup>41</sup> Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 1:35-114.

The second, 1811 outbreak, was stimulated by an American rush to purchase Indian lands in the Great Lakes-Ohio Valley region, starting in 1803-05 when Michigan Indians got involved in the sale of other native peoples' lands in Ohio. American practice then was to resettle or concentrate the native residents on the increasingly smaller unceded remains of their original territories. This era of negotiated Indian treaties ended for Michigan's native peoples in three different years, for the Potawatomi in 1833, for the Chippewa of the Upper Peninsula and the Ottawa in 1854-1855, and for the Missisauga (the Chippewa of Saginaw, Black River, and Swan Creek) in 1864.<sup>42</sup>

In these years, Michigan's Indians negotiated some fifty treaties with the United States, and another dozen or so with the British in Canada.<sup>43</sup> The kinds of business agreed to in these negotiations were

<sup>42</sup> During the French and British eras, Michigan's Indians sold numerous parcels of land to colonial authorities. Under the French regime, additional parcels were sold to individuals, while during the British era, outright sales to private parties were prohibited by the Proclamation of 1763. Indian leaders and Britons easily evaded this restriction by the device of very long term leases, running to 99 or 999 years. Charles J. Kappler, ed., *Indian Treaties, 1778-1883* (New York: Interland Publishing, 1972), and Charles C. Royce, comp., *Indian Land Cessions in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1899).

<sup>43</sup> Although in their early agreements Michigan's Indians solemnly committed themselves to perpetual fealty to the U.S., by no means all honored these agreements. Until 1843 their delegations annually visited British Indian Service posts in Canada to receive payments for their continued military-political alliances with Great Britain. James A. Clifton, *A Place of Refuge For All Time: Migration of the American Potawatomi Into Upper Canada, 1830-1850* (Ottawa: National Museum of Canada, 1975), and Robert S. Allen, *The British Indian Department and the Frontier in North America, 1755-1830* (Ottawa: National Historic Parks and Sites Branch, Parks Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs, 1975).

several. In the earliest of these, the tribes surrendered their right to deal independently with nation-states other than the American. They also gave up their right to deal directly, at least as regards land sales, with citizens and the State of Michigan. Following periods of war and defeat, the tribes agreed to peace terms imposed by the United States. Thereafter came a long series of land cessions, agreements to move out of Michigan into Indian Territory (Eastern Kansas or Oklahoma), and other items of business handled by the treaty negotiation device.

As part of the compensation for their agreeing to such stipulations, the United States in turn brought Michigan Indian groups under its special protection, as regards war with other tribes and against impositions by citizens or the state. The United States, in these negotiations, further committed itself to promote the process then called "civilization," meaning educational and other developmental inputs aimed at the eventual assimilation of Michigan's Indians into the political-economic mainstream as individuals and families, not as corporate "tribal" groups. Numerous kinds of payments were guaranteed for limited periods of time, especially in compensation for land sales: payments in cash, in goods, and in services of various kinds.

Invariably, later treaty stipulations about such payments were limited in term. There was always a cut off date after which the payments would cease. For cash payments, this was always stated in a set number of years, twenty or twenty-five or less. For compensation in the form of services, a "term certain" was also often specified, but sometimes an indefinite term was agreed to, with the unilateral power to end temporary rights to hunt and fish, or to cease delivery of educational or technical services placed in the hands of either Congress or the executive branch. Contrary to widespread belief, none of the treaties negotiated with Michigan's native peoples contained such a phrase as, "so long as the grass grows and the water flows."<sup>44</sup> There were no guarantees of perpetual payments or services

<sup>44</sup> For that matter, no such phraseology is found in *any* United States treaty with Indians. The only place such words are found is in several treaties negotiated between the Confederate States of America and Southwestern tribes in 1863. The standard compilation of the texts of American Indian treaties is Charles Royce, comp., *Indian Affairs*, vol. 2, *Laws and Treaties* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904; reprinted, Interland Publishing Company, New York, 1932). The dean of historians of Indian affairs, Francis Paul Prucha, has in preparation a magisterial historical study of Indian treaties, which is to be published by the University of California Press, shortly.

of any sort made to Indians by the United States. Throughout the nineteenth and into the first third of the twentieth centuries, the major aim of the United States was to get entirely out of the business of managing Indian affairs and of the considerable expense of subsidizing the costs of sustaining Indians as dependents. The processes and major goal of this policy were those of full-scale assimilation as detribalized, individualized citizens.

### Incorporation as Client Communities

In the early years of this process, Michigan's Indian societies were incorporated directly into the American federal system as client communities: dependencies of the federal government, a type of subordinate, internal political protectorate. As the practice of land cessions continued, when the territory that remained legally defined as "Indian country" was severely reduced, the small remaining "reservations" were placed in a federally protected trust status, free of controls by the state or local units of government until congressional legislation dictated otherwise.<sup>45</sup> In later years, when these small reserved tracts were broken up by deeding parcels of land to individual Indian owners and patenting them as private property, restrictions were commonly placed on the sale or alienation of such private titles for some years. Soon after Michigan Indians (or their heirs) acquired clear titles to such parcels, the vast majority sold or otherwise conveyed them to non-Indian owners.

In understanding this stage of incorporation into the federal system, a distinction has to be made between two major kinds of relationships between the government of the United States and Indians. The first such involved the United States in unbalanced government-to-government ties to corporate Indian organizations: tribes, bands, communities, or as recently labeled, "nations." The

For a computerized, analytical database of Indian treaties, see James A. Clifton, ed. and comp., *366 Ratified Indian Treaties: A Computerized Database* (Kalamazoo, MI: Ethnohistory Associates, 1990).

<sup>45</sup> Matthew Snipp and others sometimes call Indian reservations "captive nations" or "internal colonies," Hall, "Social Change in the Southwest," 25. In my view, this is unnecessary, emotionalized, and misleading rhetoric, especially so when applied to Michigan Indian communities.



power relationship was unbalanced because Congress reserved the right unilaterally to legislate as regards what do to, for, or about Indians; and the federal government controlled the fiscal and political means needed to enforce its decisions. This political relationship was of an "indirect rule" variety (in Michigan through about 1855). That is, the federal government conducted its Indian business obliquely, by dealing with proxies—the leaders of Indian communities. After that time, and until 1934 and later, older forms of Indian community governance were increasingly ignored and a "direct rule" system substituted, with the United States conducting its Indian business directly, through appointed agents of the executive branch's Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), who dealt with individual Indians.

As the importance of the government-to-government relationships between the United States and corporate Indian organizations declined, especially when such relations were ended by treaty agreement or other legislation, the volume of particularized relationships between the federal government and individual Indians soared. This process of dealing directly with individual Indian "wards" continued to increase even after they and their offspring became American citizens. The importance of this distinction between intergovernmental relationships, where Indian corporate entities were the main parties, and federal-individual Indian relationships, where persons were the main subjects of federal attention and service, is important to understanding later, especially recent developments.

For instance, by the early 1930s all Michigan Indians were citizens, with all the rights and responsibilities accruing to that status. The process of citizenizing Indians in the state began early, under the amended terms of Michigan's 1837 constitution. This enactment provided that Indians who became tax-paying land owners were eligible for citizenship, and quickly some individuals and small groups voluntarily took advantage of this opportunity. Later, when the last treaty with the Ottawa and Chippewa, in 1855, was ratified, under its terms the corporate, tribal organizations of these groups were dissolved, and all members "individualized" as citizens. The Dawes General Allotment Act of 1887 added even more citizen Indians to the ranks of those already in Michigan, and the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 awarded this legal status to all not yet enfranchised. However, by then U.S. Supreme Court decisions had determined that citizenship erased neither whatever rights individuals held under earlier treaties,

nor other general obligations of the United States toward individual Indians under the "wardship" (or "guardianship") doctrine.<sup>46</sup>

For such reasons, and others, the federal government's long-term policy of eliminating its political relationships with Indian corporate groups by disbanding them, and of undertaking a fostering care of their individual members until they were prepared for inclusion as independent citizens, remained incomplete. Such American policies did not so much fail as they did produce unanticipated results.<sup>47</sup> However, applying any reasonable sociological standard, by 1925 Michigan's Indians by-and-large were fully assimilated politically, economically, and in the main socially. In rural areas where they lived in large numbers, Ottawa and Chippewa, for instance, were regularly elected to township and county offices. In occupational terms, they were increasingly integrated into the local and statewide economies. Educationally, most attended integrated schools.<sup>48</sup> Yet they remained Indians, citizens with an anomalous dual status, and a unique claim upon the sensitivities and yearnings of other Americans. By now, Americans spoke of "the Indian" as "a race," and in the usual confusion of cultural features with those that are genetic, attributed various inherited characteristics to them. In fact, as regards their biological antecedents, Michigan's Indians by then were an amalgam of indigenous, European, sometimes African, and even Asian ancestors.

Included among these people of dual identifications and affiliations were some whose ancestors had been citizens, as of 1934, for nearly a century. These were descendants, for example, of those Chippewa at Keweenaw Bay who in the 1840s had purchased their own private

<sup>46</sup> Prucha, *The Great Father*, II:793-94.

<sup>47</sup> In older sociological thinking, "assimilation" was seen as a one-way process—from a subordinate or emigrant group into a dominant one, as permanent, as excluding dual "national" identifications and loyalties, and as irreversible. We now know better. The processes of assimilation may flow in several social directions; it may produce temporary and partial changes in identity; complex, multiple social identities are often one result, and they are reversible.

<sup>48</sup> Michigan's "assimilated" Indians, individuals who were citizens without membership in a federally recognized tribal entity, remained eligible for, and many attended, segregated federal Indian boarding schools such as Mt. Pleasant Indian School, and for advanced technical training, Haskell Indian Institute.

land and assumed the protected position of citizens of the state, which much reduced the power of the federal government over their destinies. The same tactic was also used by Potawatomi communities in Southwestern Michigan. One of these was the Pokagon (Catholic) Band, whose ancestors had resided in the St. Joseph River Valley since the 1690s. The other was the Huron (Methodist) Band, who earlier had been moved to southwestern Michigan west from the Detroit area. Both, together with all other Michigan Potawatomi, had been pressed hard to leave Michigan entirely and to resettle in Indian Territory southwest of the Missouri River.

Of the two, the Huron Band were obligated by treaty to resettle in the West, while in the 1833 negotiations the Pokagon Band secured a special exemption and authorization to remain in Michigan. Both were initially landless, hence particularly vulnerable, and they countered federal pressures to immigrate by purchasing land and becoming tax-paying citizens of Michigan. Of the two, the Huron Band added a special cachet to this tactic; by their own traditional history accounts, they supposedly persuaded Michigan's governor to accept title on their behalf to their "state reservation" (i.e., the 120 acres they had purchased) in perpetuity.<sup>49</sup>

By the 1930s, the distribution of Michigan's Indians in rural areas was of two kinds, still somewhat reflecting on older traditional adaptations. The distinction between them reflects differences in habitat and technological matters reaching back at least to the late 1700s. These were the differences discussed earlier under the rubric "dominant" and "secondary configurations." Broadly speaking, when push came to shove under the federal Indian removal policy of the period 1830-53, almost none of Michigan's Indians of the secondary configuration—the canoe-using, foraging Chippewa bands of the Upper Peninsula and the Saginaw region, would agree to resettlement in the west; and they successfully resisted the occasionally extreme pressures to induce them to move. So also did the Ottawa north of the Grand River.

<sup>49</sup> No adequate documentation supporting this tradition—letters, deeds, legislative acts, executive orders, etc.—so far has been located in the state archives. Nonetheless, Michigan authorities continue to honor this customary agreement, so the Hurons' 120 acre parcel exists as a de facto state recognized "reservation." Except in eastern states formed from the thirteen original colonies, such state—but not federally—recognized reservations are extremely rare.

Their own resistance to relocation was helped by other factors. By the time American authorities tried to propel them elsewhere, the original impetus and logic of the original removal policy had worn down and there was little support for this measure in Michigan public opinion. Moreover, by then—after 1847—Michigan was an established state whose authorities were much more supportive of the presence of Indians (as potential assimilated citizens) than the reverse. In addition, the Indian population of the northern parts of the state was small, and there was no great pressure from settlers to acquire prime agricultural land in large quantities in this region.<sup>50</sup>

In contrast, in southern Michigan—Potawatomi territory—the Indians occupied the most valuable of agricultural lands directly in the path of the advancing American settlement frontier. Starting early on after 1815, their lands were ceded in treaty after treaty, and the population was concentrated on smaller tracts. Then, in 1833, they ceded the remnants of these lands to the United States, and most Michigan Potawatomi stipulated to leave Michigan within two years after that contract's ratification by the Senate (i.e., by 1837).

As noted, one treaty-guaranteed exception consisted of the Catholic villages gathered under the leadership of Leopold Pokagon.<sup>51</sup> However, numerous other Potawatomi also evaded relocation to the west (and their treaty agreements) by one device or another. As described, the Huron band did so by purchasing their own land outright and becoming citizens. But many more Potawatomi simply fled northward into Ottawa and Chippewa country, where their descendants live today. And many hundreds more invoked their old alliances with the British and moved east, into Canada, entirely out from under American authority. There they were joined by smaller numbers of Ottawa and Chippewa from the north, and there—in Canadian reserves from Sault Sainte Marie to Walpole Island—their descendants still live.

The southernmost of Michigan's Indians, the Potawatomi, unlike those to the north, were semi-sedentary farmers. The Sauk, Fox,

<sup>50</sup> James A. Clifton, "From Bark Canoes to Pony Herds: The Great Lakes Transportation Revolution, 1750-1775," *Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village Herald* 15 (1986): 12-18.

<sup>51</sup> James A. Clifton, "Leopold Pokagon: Transformative Leadership on the St. Joseph River Frontier," *Michigan History* 69 (1985): 16-23.

Kickapoo and other tribes having moved west of their own accord many years earlier, these Potawatomi were the last of the dominant configuration to remain in Michigan. Like kindred Potawatomi bands in Indiana, Illinois, and southern Wisconsin, they had become horse-using eighty years before the removal policy affected them.<sup>52</sup> They had developed additional expertise with life on prairie lands, and growing experience with the tall-grass plains west of the Mississippi. The canoe using, fishing, wild-rice gathering communities to the north had no such new transportation technology, expertise, or dispositions. Thus, among many of the horse-nomadic Potawatomi bands, there was much less opposition to resettlement than was true of the northern bands. Many Potawatomi, however, did elect to round up their pony herds and trek into Canada rather than toward Kansas.

In this manner, centuries old subsistence adaptations, combined with geographic location and varying pressures from Americans, greatly affected how Michigan's different Indian communities reacted to the removal policy. Although many southern communities resettled elsewhere—in the west, in Canada, or among the Ottawa—some remained. In the north, nearly all stayed in place. This helps explain the distribution of Michigan's rural Indian populations today.

There is an important truth implicit in the foregoing discussion. Today, an argument commonly heard is that no Indian community can possibly endure for long unless it is formally recognized, chartered, protected, and supported by the federal government. The history of Michigan's small Potawatomi groups, and of the Ottawa and Chippewa organizations terminated by treaty provisions, indicates otherwise. All of these have persisted as viable identity groups with distinctive values, practices, dialects, interests, and goals. They persevered through the emergence of a continental United States, through civil and international wars, through economic booms and busts, through the emergence and growth of a federal government with all-pervasive political, economic, and social interests and powers. Among the key interests and powers of the federal government a concern with the fate of "the Indian" has proven especially durable and influential.

#### Transition: Reinventing the Tribe

This point is demonstrated by two pivotal federal Indian policy initiatives, one advanced legislatively in 1934, the other in 1975. Both had profound consequences for the nature of Indians, their lives, and their fortunes; and both reflected growing dependency on federal policy makers. The first of these, titled the Indian Reorganization Act, came in the midst of the Great Depression, and may be seen as one expression of the development of a full-scale American welfare state. The second, titled the Indian Self-Determination and Educational Assistance Act of 1975, coming forty years, three major wars, and two desperate periods of civil unrest later, can be understood as part of an American reaction involving failures to extend civil rights to minority groups inside the United States, and despair over exorbitantly expensive military adventures abroad.

The Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) of 1934 effectively ended a century and a half of federal policy efforts aimed at privatizing collectively ("tribally") owned Indian land, eliminating the powers of Indian community governments and their formal existence, and assimilating Indians as individual citizens. With this epochal legislation the alienation of Indian "trust" lands, whether collectively or individually owned, was stopped, safeguarding the remaining land base. Of greater importance, the IRA provided for the chartering of Indian membership corporations (in a new, modern sense, "tribes") with important political and economic functions. With this legislation the older policy of integration was replaced by one stressing political segregation.

The IRA, once the policy was implemented within Indian communities severally, began reversing the long-standing practice of direct management of the government's Indian business.<sup>53</sup> This had long involved detailed oversight of the lives of individual Indians and their communities by officials of the now huge (and still expanding) Bureau of Indian Affairs. Henceforth, increasingly, newly refashioned Indian governments were supposed to take charge of their own affairs. Starting in 1934, the United States once again began dealing with its Indian "wards" through surrogates, the new IRA "tribal" governments.

<sup>53</sup> The Indian Reorganization Act, also known as the Wheeler-Howard Act, is thoroughly described in Prucha, *The Great Father*, which also provides a useful collection of annotated references to this legislation and other features of the "Indian New Deal," 2:954-68, 993-1005, 1251-52.

<sup>52</sup> Clifton, "From Bark Canoes."

Those who conceived the IRA legislation had in mind developing in Indian communities the forms of municipal institutions.<sup>54</sup> Those who actually wrote the legislation, mainly young attorneys, actually delivered the forms of corporatism. What Indians had in mind was something else again, and their responses were highly variable.

In Michigan, as in the rest of the United States, local Indian responses to the IRA policy initiative were diverse. This new policy, conceived and designed in Washington by strangers without their consultation but "for their benefit," provoked reactions that ranged from indifference, to flat-out vehement rejection, to an enthusiastic rush to embrace the IRA's provisions. In no single community was there anything like unanimity of opinion among Indian constituents. The official reactions, negative or positive, were managed by activist minorities, leadership cadres each with its own agenda.

The Keweenaw Bay Indian community, for instance, seeing the IRA as a crucial opportunity to improve their lot, actively and successfully sought "reorganization," quickly approved a formal constitution, and proceeded to establish new forms of government and corporate enterprise. The leadership of the Huron Band Potawatomi, in contrast, perhaps because reorganization under federal law would upset their status quo (a distinctive state reservation status), remained indifferent. On the other hand, the leadership of the Pokagon Band also saw in the IRA positive inducements—a way of regaining the formal recognized tribal status they had lost by administrative actions late in the nineteenth century, and a way to obtain reservation lands in trust. The Pokagons regularly but unsuccessfully petitioned and pressured for recognition and reorganization under the IRA's provisions through the 1950s. Finally, some Ottawa had preached to them by a Catholic missionary that the IRA was a communist plot designed to overthrow the free enterprise system and their individual rights. This propaganda, perhaps, contributed to the Ottawas' opposition to accepting the IRA. But the Grand River Ottawa opposed the IRA for their own reasons. Their values and views of the

<sup>54</sup> In the ancient, imperial Roman sense of *municipalis*: partially self-governing communities with privileged relationships to and under the protection and supervision of, the central power. Personal communication to James A. Clifton from retired Commissioner of Indian Affairs Phileo Nash, 1974. Dr. Nash, a social anthropologist, was President Franklin D. Roosevelt's White House advisor on race relations, and President John F. Kennedy's Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

future brought lasting opposition to becoming "BIA Indians," as some of them today continue to phrase the basis for their opposition.<sup>55</sup>

There are important lessons in these much varied responses to the IRA. Although called "Indian" by others, and thought of as being alike, Michigan's Indians were never (and are not) of the same mind, interests, or concerns. By no means are all equally "tribally" oriented. However, during the 1930s the positive incentives of the IRA to Michigan's (and other) Indians were mainly economic. Those who willingly accepted the new "municipal" (or "corporate") forms saw this as a means of bettering their atrocious economic situation in the midst of national economic collapse. During the Great Depression, economic survival and the restoration of some prosperity were crucial to them. Political slogans such as "self-determination" or "sovereignty" were either entirely unknown or scarcely mentioned and little heeded.

#### Transition: Diversity by Policy

These shibboleths were paraded during the mid-1960s and were soon defined as dominant goals by newly developed, Indian-dominated national lobbying organizations. That is, the main push for "tribal" self-determination and sovereignty emerged in the midst of the great turmoil that so disturbed America in that period, over political and social unrest caused by the Vietnam debacle, over the extension of civil rights to African Americans and other minorities, over equality of opportunity for the poor and women. A curious, commonly unremarked difference marks the major goals sought by the Indian rights lobby as against those of the mainstream Black civil rights movement, however. For African Americans and other minorities the central aspirations were equality of opportunity and integration. For the American Indian lobby, the overriding goals were categorical

<sup>55</sup> James A. Clifton, *The Pokagons, 1683-1983: Catholic Potawatomi of the St. Joseph River Valley* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), 109-36.

privilege (based on ancestry and special rights as the "original" inhabitants of the land) and social-political separatism.<sup>56</sup>

The "plight" of the Indian "victims" and their goals were promoted on several fronts. On the level of popular culture, Hollywood and other mass media created powerful images of the Indian as a casualty of the past, generating much sentiment for uplifting Indians in the present.<sup>57</sup> In the domain of official or public culture,<sup>58</sup> academic, church, environmental, legal, and other institutions reinforced these images and swelled the numbers of American opinion makers backing, and the uncritical, often badly informed public support for the "Indian cause." By the late 1970s, a full-blown, official, orthodox "Indian Story" had emerged to mold the thinking of Americans about Indians and rally widespread support for special Indian rights.<sup>59</sup>

The federal government in all its four branches—legislative, executive, judicial, and bureaucratic—reacted by adding its powerful backing to Indian interest group lobbying. Most influential of these

<sup>56</sup> In these same years the label Native American was introduced as a new name for Indians, and achieved some popularity for a time. The words expressed powerful sentiments, connoting priority of claims to land, privileges, and funding. This was the second time in American history that an influential "Native American" interest group emerged. For nineteenth-century Native Americans, however, the opposition to and contrast with others was with *recent*, foreign-born immigrants. For late twentieth-century Native Americans, on the other hand, the opposition and contrast targets *all* arriving since 1492. This current position has more emotion than logic and genealogy on its side, since with maybe some few exceptions, all "Native Americans" today have some or many post-1492 ancestors from other continents.

<sup>57</sup> James A. Clifton, "Dancing with Savages: Kevin Costner Among the Indians," *Tawacin* (forthcoming, 1994); and Clifton, "Celluloid Savages: Filmland's Indian Affairs," in James Dowd, ed., *Essays in a Thunderstorm* (forthcoming, 1994).

<sup>58</sup> Igor Kopytoff, "Public Culture: A Durkheimian Genealogy," *Public Culture* 1 (1988): 11-16.

<sup>59</sup> Readers who remember viewing films such as *The Mission* several years ago or Kevin Costner's recent *Dances With Wolves* have seen versions of the orthodox story. On thoughtful reflection, they may appreciate that their deepest sentiments were being manipulated by film-makers using powerful stereotypes made acceptable by ceaseless repetition. Such images reinforce and perpetuate the orthodox Indian story. Despite claims to authenticity by producers such as Costner, however, these images have far more sophistry (that is, a compound of poor logic and bad history) than serious historical scholarship behind them. Clifton, *The Invented Indian*, 29-48.

were Congress and the federal courts. Congressional support peaked in 1975, with the Indian Self-Determination and Education Act (ISDEA). This legislation, together with numerous other major and minor laws, represents the core and the pinnacle of a federal turn-about, reversing the old policy of eliminating tribal entities and of assimilating Indians as individuals into American life. What has happened since is mainly legislative detail and policy implementation.

Building on the foundations laid by the IRA after 1934, ISDEA and later legislation focused attention on the creation of new and the considerable enhancement of the political powers of already existing Indian "tribes." The results of such policy initiatives have been to create hundreds of federal political enclaves, miniature "states within the states," contributing to what some see as the ethnic balkanization of America. What began in 1934 with the idea of fostering modest "municipal" powers and institutions on the diminished remains of existing Indian reservations, since the 1960s has been converted into the promotion of Indian corporations as multi-function units of government, with constitutionally based legislative, judicial, executive, and administrative powers and responsibilities.<sup>60</sup>

The model for these governments is American, not ancient Indian tradition. And like all types of government, their operations are costly. They are said by their legal advisors to have the "same status as the states" of the union but unlike the fifty constitutional states they are almost entirely dependent on outside funding for their operations, for taxation of their memberships is anathema.<sup>61</sup> What they express in form and operation is somewhat different. In keeping with one growing, elite American current of opinion stressing collective identity and rights, they have the forms and character of corporatism. Onto these Indian corporate entities, the federal government by policy is devolving many of the functions performed earlier by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Indian Health Service, and other service agencies.

<sup>60</sup> Sharon O'Brien, *American Indian Tribal Governments* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989).

<sup>61</sup> For an authoritative (if highly partisan) legal discussion of the claimed status of modern tribes, see Charles F. Wilkinson's *American Indians, Time, and the Law: Native Societies in a Modern Constitutional Democracy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), esp. 54-63. However, Wilkinson's use of historical and anthropological evidence is not reliable.

Increasingly, the federal government no longer deals with individual Indians (as "tribal Indians," not as "Indian citizens") at all. Those who are members of recognized tribal corporations must address their wants, needs, and concerns to the "tribe" in which they hold their status of member. Those for whom no such established entity exists must organize themselves, incorporate, and seek federal recognition. However, as citizens, eligible for categorical entitlements set aside for minorities, whether or not federally recognized, Indian individuals follow other strategies.

This complex situation prevails because newer federal policies, such as those expressed in the 1934 and 1975 Acts, can never entirely erase the consequences of earlier ones. Moreover, such policies are never monolithic or all-encompassing in their effects. For instance, regardless of membership (like citizenship) in officially recognized, federally protected tribal entities, all Indians of Michigan have long been citizens of the state and of the American nation. As such they are "citizens plus,"<sup>62</sup> which is what makes them eligible for whatever entitlements due them as both officially recognized Indians and as citizens. Moreover, as has always been the case, regardless of legally or socially imposed racial or social categorization of themselves as "Indians," the people so classified remain extraordinarily diverse in interests, adaptations, and styles of living.

### Counting Michigan's Indians

Some important features of this contemporary diversity can be glimpsed through a survey of Michigan's Indian population and organizations. In 1990, the U.S. Bureau of the Census enumerated 55,638 individuals classified as Indian in Michigan, out of the state's total population of 9,295,287.<sup>63</sup> At 0.06 percent of the whole, this makes Indians by far the smallest of the six utterly confused ra-

<sup>62</sup> The phrase arose as a claim by Canadian Indian advocacy groups, but it applies as accurately to the dual status of Indians in the United States. John A. Price, "Ethical Advocacy Versus Propaganda: Canada's Indian Support Groups," in James A. Clifton, ed., *The Invented Indian: Cultural Fictions and Government Policies* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1990), 255-70.

<sup>63</sup> "Census Bureau Delivers Michigan's 1990 Census Counts," *Public Information Office Release 301-763-4040* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991).

cial/ethnic/linguistic/national origin categories the Census Bureau uses to break down the entire population into politically expedient subdivisions.

We can legitimately compare this 1990 number with those delivered by the census for 1980 and 1970, but not for any earlier year. One reason for this is that the Bureau of the Census in 1970 changed its definition of what constituted an "Indian," and its way of enumerating "them." Since 1970, although the Bureau has cited an official definition of "Indian" prepared by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, its enumerators follow an easier, different course. As in the case of individuals counted as "White," "Black," "Asian/Pacific Islander," "Hispanic Origin," or "Other Race," census enumerators simply take the respondents' word that they are what they say they are, and tick off the appropriate box on their forms. If Coleman Young of Detroit, or Betty Ford of Grand Rapids, reported that they were "Indian," for U.S. census purposes they would be so counted. That is, so far as the U.S. census is concerned, being Indian is entirely a matter of self-declaration.

For the three recent decades, then, some valid comparisons are possible. One such is this: Michigan's self-identified "Indian" population increased dramatically between 1980 and 1990, from 40,050 to 55,638, or 40 percent. This increase came in a decade when the state's total population increased only 0.4 percent. Moreover, the increase in the number of census-enumerated "Indians" in Michigan occurred while the "White" population declined by 1.5 and the "Other Race" category by 7.5 percent. The growth of "Indians" easily outpaced the also substantial increase in the "Hispanic Origin" category (plus 24 percent). "Indians" in this decade were overshadowed only by the much larger augmenting of the "Asian/Pacific Islander" category (plus 85 percent).<sup>64</sup>

But these comparisons do not so much as even suggest the demographic processes underlying such raw numbers. The increased number of "Indians" does not involve mainly an excess of births over deaths, helped perhaps by some migration from other places, as in the instance of people counted as "Hispanic." Nor is it largely the result of an huge new influx of people from overseas, as in the "Asian" category. Although some proportion of the increased number of

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

"Indians" counted in 1990 certainly represents actual increases stemming from births among those here in 1980, plus some migration from other states, Canada, and elsewhere, two other quite different processes were at work to produce this result.

One of these, described more fully in the following pages, involved the addition of several new Indian "tribes" to the roster of those present in Michigan in 1980. These new tribal units, in the process of forming and obtaining federal recognition, recruited many new members who earlier may have been enumerated as "White," "Other Race," or something else. However, in Michigan as of 1990, as in the rest of the United States that year and in 1970 and 1980, this huge increase in reported "Indians" mainly represents an entirely separate social phenomenon. This is something much like what used to be called "passing," with respect to people of minute and remote African ancestry, who individually and as family units voluntarily crossed over to a "White" status and public identity during their lifetimes.<sup>65</sup> Between 1960 and 1990, the extraordinary increases in the numbers of people self-identified as "Indian" in Michigan and nation-wide has mainly involved a similar form of social mobility, from one ethnic or racial identity and status to another.<sup>66</sup>

The 1990 census results also suggest that Michigan's self-identified Indians remain somewhat more of a rural and small community folk than the general population. Of Indians, 18 percent lived in the ten largest incorporated places, and 47 percent in the ten largest counties, in contrast with 23 and 65 percent, respectively, for Michigan's total

<sup>65</sup> In the older sociological literature, and in popular thinking still, Blacks who passed as "White" were often thought of as denying their "true" or "real" race. No such implication is intended in this discussion. Racial and ethnic classification of peoples is an arbitrary, culturally defined matter. Classifying people as one race or another because of partial and remote ancestry represents a peculiarly American form of biological insanity. Clifton, *The Invented Indian*, and Clifton, *Being and Becoming Indian*.

<sup>66</sup> For outstanding demographic research on this phenomenon, see Jeffrey S. Passel, "Provisional Evaluation of the 1970 Census Count of American Indians," *Demography* 13 (1976): 397-407; Jeffrey S. Passel and Patricia A. Berman, "An Assessment of the Quality of the 1980 Census Data For American Indians," *Proceedings of the Section on Survey Research Methods, American Statistical Association* (1985): 50-59; and Jeffrey S. Passel and Patricia A. Berman, "Quality of the 1980 Census Data for American Indians," *Social Biology* 33 (1986): 163-82.

population.<sup>67</sup> However, relatively few Indians live on or even near the small established reservations where their tribes have some limited jurisdiction. Detailed 1990 census figures for this are not yet available, but those for 1980 are. In 1980, of a total self-declared Michigan Indian population of 40,050, 1815 persons—less than 5 percent—were found residing on the four federally recognized reservations in Michigan as of that date. Whatever else may characterize them, Michigan's Indians are today a highly dispersed people, living intermingled with others.<sup>68</sup>

### Indians by Federal Definition

Although it is not used in the process of actual enumeration, the Bureau of the Census does take heed of the legal definition of "Indian" promulgated by the Office of Management and Budget in 1978. This formal definition is used as a guideline by federal agencies in making decisions about the eligibility of applicants for those categorical aids and entitlements Congress has established for Indians. The wording of this definition in 1978 marked an important revision of the one that had evolved over many years of federal practice: legislative, judicial, and administrative. It is instructive to examine this legal definition and to comment on it. So far as the OMB and other federal agencies are concerned, an "Indian" is: "A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America and who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition."<sup>69</sup> Observe that there are two central criteria in this definition, "origins" and "cultural identification." The former

<sup>67</sup> "Census Bureau Delivers."

<sup>68</sup> "American Indians, Eskimos, and Aleuts on Identified Reservations and in the Historic Areas of Oklahoma (Excluding Urbanized Areas)," *U.S. Bureau of the Census* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1986), 2:D11-14. A substantial percentage of the Indians residing in Michigan are from communities outside the state; many identify no particular "tribal" affiliation, much less membership in an official federal tribe. In the main, these are among the millions of Americans who, following family tradition or their own inclination, think of themselves as being a "little bit Indian."

<sup>69</sup> Directive No. 15. Office of Management and Budget (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1978).

expresses a racial component, commonly spoken of as possessing "Indian blood." In the latter, the social or ethnic component is evident. Both are mixed and confused together, and many Americans regularly assert Indian status on the basis of either one or the other, as well as both.

Despite its legalistic phrasing, created to define a bounded social category for the purposes of restricting the delivery of federal services and entitlements, this definition is marked by extraordinary and perhaps politically convenient ambiguities. One of these is geographic: "original peoples of North America." This is a portal big enough to drive a large majority of Mexico's population through, followed by several hundred thousand Canadian citizens. Following out the implications of this part of the definition, most of those 201,596 residents of Michigan in 1990 who identified themselves as "Hispanics," particularly those from Mexico and Central America, might conceivably decide to "pass" as Indian.<sup>70</sup> To these, conceivably, might be added a substantial majority of those 1,291,706 Michiganders enumerated in 1990 as "Black." For in the family traditions of a large majority of African Americans, Indian ancestors play minor and sometimes important roles, giving them the right to the same claim often expressed by many other Americans, that they are partially Indian in ancestry. That more African Americans have not actually sought or established Indian status results, in large part, from the enduring strength of the American cultural system for classifying people by putative race, reinforced by powerful racial stereotypes about what Blacks or Indians should look like.

The second, social criterion was probably intended to limit social or identity "migration" into the ranks of America's officially recognized Indians, at least so far as controlling federal expenditures is involved. If so, the brakes have long since failed. Limiting the official status "Indians" to those who maintain identification "through tribal affiliation or community recognition" is no less ambiguous, hence exploitable and expandable, than is the possession of an ancestor who was one of the "original peoples" of North America. In the first place,

<sup>70</sup> This has been happening in California for several years. Recent immigrants from Mexico and Central America there, once they discover the advantages of being Indian in the United States, are now claiming Indian status. Personal communication from Dr. Mark Theil, Special Collections, Memorial Library, Marquette University, Milwaukee WI.

this part of the definition is patently circular: the "community recognition" may well come from non-Indians, and it may be expressed within a group of obscure, mixed antecedents who define one another as Indian. Both sources of identification are operative in the United States today.

Overall, this federal definition of legal Indian status rests upon two shaky pillars: a claim to biological ancestry and an assertion of social affiliation and recognition. As such, the definition has a powerful influence on how Americans think about Indianness, and on who shows up to claim Indian status. What this 1978 definition lacks—implicit or explicit criteria applied in earlier years—is a different matter.

One missing criterion is cultural. When the United States first began dealing with Indians in Michigan and elsewhere, they were identity groups who spoke distinctive languages, practiced their own religions, and lived according to values and patterns separate from those of other Americans. In those years, no one had a problem in identifying who was and who was not Chippewa, Ottawa, or Potawatomi. There was a problem, as discussed earlier, with marginal folk such as the Métis, but this was later resolved by classifying them as "Indians by blood." In this manner, historically, an American racial system of classifying diverse peoples overrode the cultural one.

The long-standing policy of trying to erase learned, socially patterned differences between Indians and other Americans—of making them over into English-speaking, Christian, farming or working-class citizens—and of integrating them individually into American institutions, also certainly contributed to the demise of an explicit, practical cultural criterion for defining anyone as Indian. To policy-induced transformations of cultural ways were added the important influence of parents not themselves Indian in ancestry or culture. Over the generations, as the ancestors of "Indians by blood" were increasingly Europeans, this process of change was particularly important.

For many decades the United States government, taking note of increasing dilution of the Indian ancestry of its wards, the "Indians by blood," tried to set limits to those it would recognize as official Indians: those eligible for whatever categorical aids the United States provided, and those eligible for whatever resources were owned by the organized tribes. It did so by following out the confused biological logic of the "Indian by blood" racial doctrine. The cut-off point for



delivery of such federal aids and services, and for access to tribal resources, was set at "one-fourth Indian blood." This limit or, rarely, an even more restrictive one such as "half-blood" or "fullblood," was written into the membership provisions of nearly all IRA constitutions as that 1934 legislation was implemented. In practice, this "one-fourth blood" limit meant that applicants for membership, or federal services, had to prove they had at least one "full-blood Indian" grandparent. Because there is no such biological thing as "Indian blood," there are no medical tests for such certification. It is purely a matter of genealogical inquiry. Since family trees are socially constructed documents, they can be readily uprooted, replanted, grafted onto, or sheared as the need arises. Efforts by marginal people to secure admission under the "one-fourth blood" restriction sometimes produced feats of peculiar arithmetic,<sup>71</sup> selective forgetting, and retrospective falsification to accomplish their goal.

In any respect, the 1978 OMB definition represented the near demise in federal practice of the "one-fourth blood" criterion. It was killed off by a combination of factors. One of these was the work of the national Indian lobby, pressuring for an extension of federal patronage to ever more Indians under revised, diluted definitions of that status. Another powerful source of this redefinition came within the federally recognized tribal corporations, themselves. There because of continuing, indeed, increasing rates of intermarriage with non-Indians, many "one-fourth blood" parents with non-Indian spouses found that their children were not eligible for tribal membership or federal services. They did not like this one bit. The solution was to change to a "one drop of blood" criterion.

Although this "one-fourth blood" membership limit is still found in the constitutions of organized tribes, it is increasingly ignored or circumvented, and it can be altered officially. Finally, in the draft constitutions of the more than one hundred organizations nationwide that have applied for official, federally recognized Indian tribal status, an entirely different criterion is often expressed, one that parallels the 1978 OMB definition. Some of the older, long-recognized federal tribes have also taken the same step in revising their membership criteria. The result is what is called a "descendency membership roll,"

<sup>71</sup> For example, a "1/8th blood" father plus a "1/8th blood" mother equals a "1/4th blood" child.

where the criterion of descent is the documentation of at least one "Indian" ancestor of any degree somewhere in the past, however remote.

Some of these groups, heavily intermarried with others for centuries, would have grave difficulty finding any ancestors of "one-fourth Indian blood" anywhere in recent generations. If the "one-fourth blood" criterion were applied strictly to them, it would have devastating effects on their membership rolls, and their aspirations toward legal Indian status. As a consequence of these changed definitions, in Oklahoma one commonly encounters people who can display an official tribal I.D. card, certifying that the holder is a "1/256th" or a "1/512th blood" enrolled member of one tribe or another.<sup>72</sup> In Michigan, among both federally recognized tribes and those organizations seeking that status, the dilution of indigenous ancestry probably has not yet reached that stage. However, because descendency rolls are becoming the norm, and because intermarriage with non-Indians continues apace, it may well do in coming generations.

#### Michigan's Contemporary Indian Groups: Resuscitating Tribes

Demographic considerations and changing definitions of Indian status aside, how many formally organized, officially recognized political entities—federal "tribes"—are there in Michigan? The number changes from year to year, and recently has been increasing exponentially. In 1980 there were but four; until 3 August 1994, there were seven. On that date, Congress passed legislation resuscitating three additional tribal entities (the Pokagon Potawatomi and the Little Traverse Bay and Little River Ottawa), making ten as of late 1994; by 2000 there may well be a dozen or more—after that, who can say? The four recognized tribes as of 1980 were: Bay Mills (Chippewa), Isabella (Chippewa, i.e., Missisauqua of Saginaw, Black River, and Swan Creek); Keweenaw Bay (or L'Anse, Chippewa); and Hannahville (Potawatomi). These all have somewhat different histories.

The Keweenaw Bay and Bay Mills communities were products of treaties in 1854 and 1855, the Isabella community from an 1855 treaty

<sup>72</sup> This represents personal encounters of the author with such persons, who willingly display their I.D. cards to establish their "Indian" identity.

somewhat amended in 1864—treaties stressing individual homesteads rather than “in-common” or “tribal” land. The aims of these treaties were to assimilate the Indians as land-owning tax-paying citizens. The origins of the Hannahville Potawatomi community are different, interestingly so. In the 1833 treaty affecting Michigan’s (and other Great Lakes region) Potawatomi, these communities were obligated to vacate the region by 1837 and to resettle in Indian Territory. The ancestors of the Hannahville group refused to do so. Some remained in northern Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula, others returned there after living many years in Canada. When they returned, they were landless, desperately poor, and without any federal services. Responding to pleas from their American supporters, in 1917 Congress awarded them land, official tribal status, and federal services. Here was the first of what would be several congressionally mandated new tribes and reservations in Michigan, the product of a successful lobbying effort. Moreover, as pointed out earlier, federal Indian policy has never been monolithic. The Hannahville experiences helps make that point. In establishing this new, collectively owned, “tribally” organized reservation, Congress ran directly against the dominant Indian policy of that era, which was exactly the reverse: to disestablish reservations, break-up tribal organizations, and individualize Indians.

By 1990, three more newly established Indian “tribes” had been carved out of Michigan’s political landscape by federal actions. These were Sault Sainte Marie (Chippewa), Grand Traverse (or Peshawbetown, Ottawa), and the third, as of 1988—Lac Vieux Desert (Chippewa). Again, the histories of these groups and the origins of their establishment are, in instructive ways, different.

The small Lac Vieux Desert community represents the splintering of a long-established organization, the Keweenaw Bay Indian community. Established by the Treaty of 1854, the Keweenaw Bay community was designed as a temporary collecting point, where upon several small Chippewa communities on the Upper Peninsula would be concentrated before being later relocated west of the Mississippi, including those already living on or near the Bay, and the smaller village at Lac Vieux Desert near the Wisconsin line. Until 1988, the Lac Vieux Desert people were officially members of the Keweenaw Bay reservation community that had been reorganized under the IRA in the late 1930s. There they had been paid their treaty annuities until these expired. There they received whatever services the federal government owed them by treaty obligation, until the terms specified

for these services lapsed. Later, they were—individually—awarded titles to parcels of land. Nonetheless, a strongly traditional group in religion and other customs, the Lac Vieux Desert preferred not to live among the Catholic and Methodist congregations dominating Keweenaw Bay Chippewa affairs. So they continued to reside near Lac Vieux Desert on small parcels of land they had purchased outright in the late nineteenth century.<sup>73</sup> This new official tribe and reservation were, like the Hannahville example, established by direct congressional action, as a consequence of lobbying on behalf of the Vieux Desert people.

It is possible that one day another splinter group might elect to break away from Keweenaw Bay. The descendants of those who originally lived on the Ontonagon reservation, first settled in 1854, are an example. Soon after receiving clear titles to their private holdings there, the Ontonagon group sold them and moved to Keweenaw Bay, where they have lived since. Their originally separate community origins might be mobilized one day as argument for separation from the existing Keweenaw Bay organization.

The other two official tribes established since 1980 took a different, administrative path. This is called “status clarification,” a general program established by executive order to deal with the droves of “unrecognized,” allegedly deserving Indian groups who began lobbying for official tribal status in the late 1960s. The status clarification program consists of an administrative means of achieving official certification for applicant, ostensibly Indian organizations. It is managed by the Branch of Acknowledgment and Research (BAR) of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, whose personnel (anthropologists, historians, and genealogists) must deal with the one hundred plus petitions for tribal status coming into their office. The pace of decision making by BAR has been glacial, made so by the strictness of the several criteria for recognition, the slowness of applicant Indian organizations in delivering the mass of documentation required and a small staff with a notable tendency to a peculiar variety of bureaucratized academic nitpicking, and the strong opposition of the large, influential, long-recognized federal tribes (which dominate BIA

<sup>73</sup> Clifton, “Pioneers Advocates of Methodism.”

decision making) to having any additional Indians competing with them for shares of the federal tax pie.<sup>74</sup>

One of the criteria for official recognition that must be applied by BAR prohibits the establishment of a new tribe carved out of an existing one.<sup>75</sup> This is why the Lac Vieux Desert faction went directly to their congressman; they were not at all eligible for independent tribal status under the status clarification program. Once more, their success shows that federal Indian policy is not a monolithic thing. In any respect, the Sault Sainte Marie Chippewa and the Grand Traverse Ottawa achieved official tribal status during the 1980s by the alternative route. They successfully made their case administratively, by somehow persuading BAR that theirs were worthy cases for "status clarification," establishing them as tribes *de novo*.

Besides these seven tribes officially recognized as of 1991 were five other Indian organizations, three of them impatiently waiting in line to have their status "clarified" by the Branch of Acknowledgment and Research. These five were the Potawatomi Nation, Inc. (i.e., the Pokagon Bands, Catholic Potawatomi), the Huron Potawatomi (of the state "reservation," Methodist Potawatomi), the Little Traverse Bay band (Ottawa), the Little River band (Ottawa), and the Burt Lake band (Ottawa-Chippewa). These groups are organized under state law as non-profit corporations, and their applications for recognition were then stalled at various stages of development and administrative processing. Together, they were represented by a statewide organization, Confederated Historic Tribes, Inc., headquartered in Lansing. Not at all patient with the snail's pace of administrative decision making in Washington, or tolerant of the onerous volume of work needed to document their cases, from time to time these applicants threatened to take the direct, special legislation, congressional route, bypassing the status clarification program laid down by the BIA years ago. In legislating about special Indian matters, Congress is an 840 pound gorilla, not to be argued with, but one particularly congenial to emotionalized appeals from local constituents and much easier for

<sup>74</sup> These observations stem from the author's professional involvement in "status clarification" projects, and his observations of the BIA and BAR in action with respect to same.

<sup>75</sup> 25 Code of Federal Regulations § 83.7.

Indians to cajole and to prevail upon than the faultfinding, capricious federal bureaucracy.

During 1991-92, three of these five still unrecognized groups finally elected to abandon efforts to secure recognition via the "status clarification" administrative process of the BAR. The Pokagon Potawatomi, together with the Little Traverse Bay and Little River Ottawa bands, centered their efforts afresh on the congressional track. In skillfully managed lobbying efforts, these three unrecognized groups quickly obtained the enthusiastic support of Michigan's congressional delegation, which carried a fast-track ball for them. Soon enough, on 3 August 1994, Congress approved legislation authorizing the reestablishment of these small groups as official Indian tribes. The wisdom of their decision (finally) to adopt the congressional route will be evident. After more than a decade of frustration in dealing with BAR, their lobbying efforts before Congress required less than three years before success rewarded their efforts.

It is worth noting that in 1994 Congress—which appeared quite unable to deal squarely with the issue of delivering adequate medical health services to all American citizens—had no difficulty in allocating the substantial funds needed to provide these and other expensive services to several thousands of Michigan's citizens now deemed official Indians. It is also worth noting that despite the congressional rhetoric which accompanied passage of this legislation, the United States was under no treaty or other existing legal obligation to provide such recognition or services to these groups. This legislation involved a purely political decision and action. Indeed, it is doubtful whether any or all of these three groups could have been successful in obtaining recognition by the administrative action of the BIA. This is so because the official criteria which BAR must apply in making its recommendations prohibits this agency from undoing administratively what Congress had once done legislatively. One of the explicit criteria for such a recommendation automatically eliminates any Indian group that Congress previously had terminated or disestablished. The Little Traverse Bay and the Little River Ottawa both had been officially terminated by Congress in 1855 in their treaty of that year.

So far as the status clarification process, or appeals to Congress for recognition as an official tribe, there are as of September 1994 only two remaining unrecognized groups of Indian descent in Michigan whose petitions for resuscitation have yet to be acted on by BAR, and who have yet to elect the congressional route. These are the Huron

Band Potawatomi and the Burt Lake Ottawa-Chippewa. Undoubtedly, once these small groups fully appreciate the success obtained in 1994 by the Pokagon, Little Traverse Bay, and the Little River Bands in dealing through Congress, they are likely also to seek a change in their status by this route.

In addition there are several clusters of less visible and less well-organized persons of Indian descent which have not yet been heard from with respect to petitioning for federal resuscitation. One of these consists of descendants of the Iroquoian Huron community that held land near Detroit until 1843.<sup>76</sup> Although these American descendants of Canada's Hurons still come together voluntarily for annual reunions, they have yet to indicate formal interest in restoring their formal tribal status. Another historic group consists of the descendants of ancestral Chippewa who live near the Marquette River, who also so far have given no indication of seeking formal tribal status. Moreover, as the Lac Vieux Desert example suggests, at any time it would be possible for a schism to develop within one of the existing recognized tribes. And other kinds of combinations or factional splits are possible.

Such future developments are possible because those of Michigan's Indians who are members of recognized tribal corporations, and those affiliated with the historic groups now seeking "status clarification," have intermarried heavily with one another, just as they have been doing with non-Indians for generations. The boundaries that mark these official or unofficial tribes are entirely arbitrary, representing modern administrative and political imperatives, not ancient racial, cultural or linguistic ones. Members of each such corporate entity have multiple social ties with those who are enrolled in other organizations. So, in terms of kinship and other powerful bonds, the memberships of all such organizations are overlapping and sometimes conflicting. For that matter, it is entirely possible that the large unattached populations of Indians-by-definition living the Detroit metropolitan area might one day organize formally and lobby Congress for recognition as an official tribal entity.

Because of these overlapping identifications, it is impossible to provide a firm estimate of how many of Michigan's 55,638 self-

<sup>76</sup> Not to be confused with the Huron [River] Band Potawatomi, these are the Iroquoian Hurons, related to the Wyandot of Ohio and the Hurons of Anderdon (Windsor, Ontario) across the Detroit River.

enumerated Indians (as of 1990) are affiliated with the ten official tribes and, more particularly, with those groups as yet unrecognized by the federal government. This is so because the recognized tribes can and do add new members to their rolls by altering their membership criteria or by an adoption process; it is also complicated by conflicting claims about what persons belong to which of the as yet to be formally recognized historic groups.<sup>77</sup> About 25,000, some 60 percent of those the U.S. census enumerates as Indian, would be a generous estimate of the numbers enrolled in the official tribes. For the balance of Michigan's approximately 15,000 or so other Indians, no useful statistics are available. Many, although residing in Michigan, are enrolled members of recognized tribes headquartered in other states (and Canada). If studies of the national Indian population for 1980 serve as a basis for inference, many of Michigan's other self-declared Indians would claim no particular tribal affiliation. And, as in the 1980 census, a percentage of them will claim to be members of some tribe or other, somewhere, but they flatly reject being identified and enumerated as "Indian."<sup>78</sup>

<sup>77</sup> There is some competition between the leadership of the unrecognized groups for members. At least one such is considerably more enthusiastic than are others about recruiting people claimed as members elsewhere. This competition occurs because the federal government funds tribal operations and serves on a per capita basis. The larger the membership, the more federal dollars are delivered.

<sup>78</sup> This may surprise some readers, but there are citizens who do not wish to have American racial labels hung on their persons. These emphasize tribal affiliation in social and cultural, that is ethnic, terms. Recent months have seen a spate of newspaper accounts of individuals who are products of "mixed marriages," who resent being forced into one or the other of the federal government's fixed and arbitrary "racial" categories.

### Special Interest Group Lobbying

In addition to recognized and unrecognized tribal entities and other clusters of Indians in Michigan, there are several regional and statewide Indian organizations. One, the Confederated Historic Tribes, Inc. group has been mentioned. Another is the Northern Michigan Ottawa organization. However, perhaps the most important, influential, and instructive of these organizations was the product of statewide lobbying in the 1970s and is a creature of Michigan's legislature.

This is the Michigan Commission on Indian Affairs, which began as an informal study group under the governor's office. Its membership, at first nine, was originally mainly non-Indian, but over the years this has changed. This eleven member commission is now entirely Indian, and the members are selected to represent all regions of the state, including two legislatively mandated members representing the large urban Indian population of the Detroit metropolitan area. The Commission, by law, may become involved in any matter affecting Indians. It provides the legislature and executive with advice and recommendations, and may also prepare legislation. It acts as the official liaison between all branches of the state's government and Indian organizations and groups.<sup>79</sup>

Compared to Michigan's other ethnic or racial groups, the Michigan Commission on Indian Affairs is unique. Michigan Indians do not represent a potent force on election day anywhere, being merely 0.6 percent of the state's population and widely scattered at that. So astute lobbying and moral suasion are substituted for thousands of ballots, or substantial campaign contributions. If Michigan's Indians constitute the state's smallest minority, they may also be, relatively speaking, its most favored politically.

No other racial or ethnic group in Michigan, for example, has persuaded the legislature to deliver an entitlement like the Michigan Indian Tuition Waiver program. One of but four states with such a program, Michigan's is, perhaps, the most generous. This entitlement consists of tuition free education at any state post-secondary institution: technical, college-level, graduate, and professional. Unlimited in

number of years, the tuition waiver awards continue so long as the student remains in good standing and is making progress toward a degree. Originally intended for Michigan's Indian residents who were members of an organized Michigan Indian group, whether or not recognized by the federal government, the entitlement has since been informally extended to applicants who were non-residents, or residents enrolled in tribes of other states. As in all such categorical aids programs nationwide, where the boundaries for entitlements tend to get pushed outward, this tuition waiver entitlement is one of numerous powerful incentives for claiming Indian status. Michigan attempts to check this by imposing a "1/4th blood quantum" restriction. Given the rapidly changing definition of who constitutes an Indian, and the large increase in the number of persons so denominated, it remains to be seen how long this brake will hold. On the federal level, for instance, three years ago efforts to curtail rapidly escalating health care delivery services by imposing a "1/4th blood" cut-off utterly failed in the face of a storm of protest from the Indian rights lobby.

### Conclusion

With this sketch of 350 years of biological, social, and cultural transformations in mind, it is time to reconsider and expand on that first short answer to the key question posed in the title of this essay. As preliminary, a few cautionary notes. First, the kinds of social arrangements or entities named by these six key terms are not mutually exclusive. This is important also because, second, some of these terms were unknown in any language as part of everyday or even scholarly vocabulary in the 1600s (e.g., race), or even in the 1800s (e.g., special interest group). Indeed, the key theoretical word organizing this article, ethnicity, was only coined—deliberately—and came into scholarly use during the late 1920s. Only then did a few forward looking sociologists and anthropologists begin urging the use of ethnic group and ethnicity for central theoretical constructs, as a means of moving thinking away from the confusions about racial determinants of behavior and culture.

Another important caution is semantic. Although such words as nation, tribe, and estate have a long history, their meanings have changed dramatically over the centuries. In 1642, for instance, when a French cartographer drew a map locating the *Nation de Feu* in Michigan, he did not use nation in anything resembling the modern

<sup>79</sup> These comments are based on the author's observations of and interviews with current and former members of the Commission.

sense of nation-state. Another cartographer, or a Jesuit father reporting on which groups lived where, might well have used a different term, *Gens de Feu* for the same (non-existent) population, with no difference in meaning. "Nation" in French usage then, carried about the same meaning as "a people" today. In truth, as late as 1833, when American authorities invented an entity they called the "United Nation of Chippewa, Ottawa, and Potawatomi," it was for convenience's sake, an easy way of assembling many autonomous bands from three tribes in order to negotiate a treaty with them. There was nothing united or national about this assembly before and after that date. Until that time, the word "nation" in European languages was used loosely. Satisfactory modern translations would include a people, or identity group or, being more exact, band or tribe. However, when used through the early 1800s there was an important idea implicit in using the word nation. This was the association of the named identity group with special legal rights and a particular territory. The significance of this will become apparent shortly.

In addition, we have to distinguish between Indian populations—aggregates of individuals—and Indian corporate groups, which have jural status and a legal identity of their own. For example, contemporary Indians, that is, people, commonly think and speak of their "tribes" as governments, in the same way as do other Americans when talking about "Congress" or "Lansing." Moreover, as indicated, the federal government seems bent on dealing exclusively with those Indian governments it has created, to the exclusion of dealings with people. Further, as just remarked, there are aggregates of Indians in Michigan associated with no tribal organization.

One final caution must be added, if readers are not to be plunged into a semantic swamp. In this essay these key terms—tribe, nation, estate, race, ethnic group, special interest group—are used as part of a scholarly nomenclature, not ordinary street language. By and large, they are some of the key technical words used in discussion of the varieties of social stratification which yield different forms of social inequality.<sup>80</sup> That is the key question addressed in this essay. How

<sup>80</sup> The author draws theoretical inspiration and technical vocabulary concerning social stratification mainly from Gerald Berreman, *Social Inequality: Comparative and Developmental Approaches* (New York: Academic Press, 1981).

were Indian identity groups fitted into an over-reaching system of social stratification and inequality, say, in 1634? How so a century or two later? How so today?

An explicit answer to the first of these queries is as follows. When Europeans first visited them the native peoples of Michigan were fully autonomous societies; technically, in the modern sense, they were tribes or bands. There was no larger social system embracing them, relegating them to one level or another of a pattern of stratified inequality of any sort. That experience and that kind of system emerged over the decades as Europeans worked to incorporate native communities into first the fringes, and later into the internal arrangements of their own imperial and nation-state social orders.

A clarification is required. Today's Indian groups are commonly called tribes or bands, and some have started using nation as part of their own self-names. As regards the former two, none today are tribes or bands in the technical, anthropological sense: the usage is no more that customary. Tribal or band-level societies persist only so long as they possess a large degree of freedom of decision-making and movement, in both their internal and external relations. Modern "tribes," so-called, possess little control over their external relationships, and their internal powers are limited to those allowed by Congress and the federal courts. These Indian organizations, chartered and incorporated under federal law, are established and managed as client communities of the United States. As regards the use of nation, either by themselves or their support groups, is basically political rhetoric, sloganizing. On the one hand, nation may be used in an off-hand fashion to represent large, if presently unrealistic, aspirations. On a more serious level, for a minority of activists, it represents bitter resistance to the anomalous, subordinate status Indian governments have in the federal system. This is nationalist sentiment and rhetoric; it concentrates on a push toward sovereign nationhood and finds some expression in a few small militant circles, but it is not exactly flourishing in Indian country.

As Michigan's indigenous societies became increasingly incorporated into European, then American social systems, and as they changed over the years and began developing some common interests, Europeans categorized them in a new way. Late in the eighteenth century the word Indian became standard usage as a label for all, and associated with this was the idea of biological determinism. Indian came to mean a race, in contrast with other races—White, Asian,

Black, and so on. In important ways, in both popular thinking and officially (as in U.S. census categories), this thinking is still prevalent. It has been greatly modified, however. Today, both on the level of government and in the minds of the people involved, being Indian racially means possessing at least "a little Indian blood"—at minimum one identifiable Indian ancestor. This is a culturally constructed way of ascribing racial status, and it carries with it deep-seated assumptions about the nature of the persons so classified. One of these is the right of access to whatever entitlements are made available to the social category called Indian. Another is the expectation that Indians-by-definition will express their identities in some manner individually—with costume or ornamentation, or in groups—as in an annual Powwow.

This ascription of a joint racial status, however, does not override local interests, local organizations, and more specific group identities. Here we find the core of Indianness as ethnicity, expressed through voluntary associations, communities, and numerous other organizations, and also in individual declarations of being Chippewa or Ottawa. Such local groupings are heirs to the specific traditions of those of their ancestors who were Chippewa or Ottawa, and heirs as well to the special obligations, the unfinished nineteenth-century Indian business of the federal government, such as treaty rights allegedly due each such modern community.

Severally, as local ethnic groups, and jointly, on the basis of ascribed race, Indians in modern America function as special interest groups. On the national level—through such organizations as the National Congress of American Indians or the American Indian Movement—as well as on the local and regional level—through individual tribal entities and such associations as the Northern Michigan Ottawa and the Confederated Historic Tribes organizations—they plead their special case. Their lobbying efforts are directed at governments (state and federal), other institutions (e.g. churches), other special interest groups (e.g. environmental activists), the media, and the public. The power of Indians as a special interest group is remarkable. Which other of Michigan's races or ethnic groups has won for themselves such mandated representation as the Michigan Commission on Indian Affairs? Which have won exemption from state law for high-stakes bingo or casino gambling operations? Which have gained for all their children tuition exemptions at Michigan universities? Not the Armenians, or Byelorussians, or

Chinese, or Dutch, or Filipinos, or Hispanics, or Jews, or Poles, or Turks, or any of the other ethnic groups who populate modern Michigan.

In discussing how to understand modern Indians in terms of their place in the way the whole of Michigan's population is stratified, such matters as tribe, nation, race, ethnicity, and special interest group represent familiar ground. Yet, however useful such thinking may have been, there is a residue of ambiguity that requires clarification. This is so because, however much Indians are like Blacks, Hispanics, or Slovaks seen in terms such as race or ethnicity, the place Indians hold in modern America's system of stratification and inequality is distinctive.

This reference is not to "their" special history or "their" supposed historical origins, which kinds of traditional history are regularly used to reinforce claims to special status and entitlements by all ethnic groups and races. Indian claims to being special represent, on the one hand, the rhetoric of lobbying efforts, and on the other, only one of the cultural fictions that every group in complex societies constructs about itself, its origins, and its distinctive past. Among modern Indians in Michigan, these inventive historical and cultural traditions are believed, shared, and manipulated by many thousands of individuals who are as much or more French, Anglo-Saxon, Dutch, or Danish, even African or Asian in ancestry, as they are indigenous American. This is the consequence of fifteen or more generations of intermarriage, with biological and cultural consequences that have been overpowered by American popular thinking about race and ethnicity, as well as by powerful institutions.

Aside from race or ethnicity, the place of Indians in America is marked in three special ways: politically, in law, and in territory. Indian organizations have distinct political powers, and a unique political relationship with the United States. These powers are expressed territorially, "Indian country" as defined under federal law; and organized tribal units have considerable special jurisdictional powers and other distinctive rights (such as freedom from state and local taxation) within such tribal territories. These territories—reservations—are a form of modern sanctuary. All the matters pertaining to the special place of Indians in the American social system are enshrined in a huge, complex body of federal Indian law, the product of more than two centuries of legislation, court decisions, and precedents.

Together, these three special features—political, legal, jural—mark a form of vertical stratification that supposedly waned with the passing of Europe's feudal era. Indians in these special ways are set apart from all other American groups as an estate, as were the nobility, the clergy, and commoners in feudal Europe. In this fashion, as in few others, the social structural place of the Indian in Michigan today differs from that of all other ethnic or racial groups in the this state.

## "WE ALSO SERVE": AMERICAN INDIAN WOMEN'S ROLE IN WORLD WAR II

by

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World War II was an era in which many groups in American society, as well as women of all ages, took advantage of the less-restrictive job market. In fact, an historian in the early 'seventies claimed that "the war marked a watershed in the history of women at work." While this concept may have been overstated, since resistance to women in the workplace continued, the increasing drain of male workers forced women to be drawn into the labor market. This was, for instance, the first time in history that the federal government encouraged and recruited women who had never participated in the labor force. As the war continued, women already in the work force experienced increased occupational mobility. Professional women overcame some of the gender-based barriers preventing employment in higher-paying, more-prestigious jobs, and women of color gained entry to jobs previously denied them because of race. Native American women also took advantage of this era of opportunity. An exodus from Indian reservations occurred as more than 65,000 people left for the armed forces and defense-related industry; at least one-fifth of all able-bodied women on reservations found outside employment.<sup>2</sup>

Change for American Indians, however, did not occur simply with the movement off the reservation. Women who remained to secure

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<sup>2</sup> William Chafe, *The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 136; Gerald Nash, *The American West Transformed: The Impact of the Second World War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), chapters 6-8.