

The Values Carry On: Aboriginal Identity Formation of the Urban-Raised Generation

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In research with urban Aboriginal men from the Toronto area, it was found that families inherently passed on Indigenous cultural values regardless of how explicitly the parents taught these values to their children. Aboriginal cultural values are ingrained in the families and are passed down such that they may be communicated and absorbed implicitly. The values of respect, love, autonomy, family, acceptance, ingenuity, and ability to adapt as they are uniquely interpreted in Indigenous cultures were mentioned by the participants as those cherished by their families. Employing a learning circle methodology revealed some of the historical or social influences that affected choices to identify openly as Aboriginal for members of diverse generations in the times and places where they lived.

The idea that Aboriginal¹ culture(s) is or are lost is often assumed by urban non-Aboriginal people because highly visible symbols of the culture are not expressed in urban areas on an everyday basis. Although the material signifiers of Aboriginal culture such as dress, wild traditional food, housing, and technologies are often first called to mind by non-Aboriginal people (Berkhofer, 1979; Crosby, 1991), it is the values that sustain the culture and ensure its survival in any environment (Johnston, 1995). In a study of how several self-described Aboriginal urban men develop their cultural identities, the men demonstrated how the values that signify an Aboriginal identity continued to survive and were learned primarily from family members (Restoule, 2004). The values of respect, love, autonomy, acceptance, ingenuity, and ability to adapt as they are uniquely interpreted in Indigenous cultures were mentioned by the participants as those cherished by their families.

Coming to understand how family values are also cultural values was a struggle that for this small group of men became most salient when they came in contact with the urban multicultural school environment the cultures and values of which are often markedly different from those of Indigenous world views. The encounter with formal schooling is described elsewhere (Restoule, 2004, 2005). This article focuses on how the urban-raised generation experience and learn Indigenous values from their families regardless of the older generation's attempts to be silent about this identity. Greater awareness of the process of identity formation can help educators of Aboriginal students understand the potential complexity and conflict faced by young Aboriginal people in urban areas. For

teachers of Aboriginal students, the implications of this understanding may be far-reaching. Teachers should not assume that the learner has access to a wide Aboriginal community with knowledge of its history, ceremonies, language, and other cultural traits. They may, however, be wise to learn more about traditional Aboriginal values and world views and seek to adapt their teaching approaches accordingly, just as they would to creating a learning environment that respects multiple intelligences. Some of the values and ethics that could be accommodated are mentioned in Brant (1990) and Ross (1996/2006) and include the ethic of noninterference, the ethic respecting anger not be shown, the conservation/withdrawal tactic, the ethic respecting praise and gratitude, and the notion that the time must be right.

Data and Methodology

Using circle methodology to learn about male Aboriginal identity formation in urban areas, I found that cultural identities were learned through interaction with families, communities, formal education, Creation, and social symbols and stereotypes (Restoule, 2004). Two circles were held in Toronto in 2003 with a total of seven Aboriginal men recruited through local Aboriginal service agencies for urban residents. One circle consisted of four men, and another three. Test interviews were conducted with three additional men before the circles met, and their words were incorporated into the research. The seven circle participants all responded to an ad asking "Aboriginal" men to take part in a circle about identity. Selection criteria included the stipulation that participants must have lived in urban areas for at least 75% of their lives. Many others responded to the ad but were not included in the final study because they either did not meet the urban residence requirement or did not attend one of the circles. All the circle participants regardless of where they were from were included in this study because they identified themselves as Aboriginal. As a result, I refer to them as Aboriginal in this article to respect their choice.

I favor the term *Aboriginal* because it is the most inclusive and widely accepted general label in use in Canada today. Aboriginal people are defined in the Canadian Constitution as including Indians, Métis, and Inuit people. The term *Indian* refers to all the Indigenous people in Canada who are neither Métis nor Inuit. Layered on the Indian identity is the complication of being considered a status or non-status Indian. *Indian* has a legal meaning in Canada and *status* is accorded to those who are "eligible to be registered as Indians for the purposes of the Indian Act." The term *First Nations*, although having no legal definition in Canada, has often been adopted to replace *Indian*, which is seen as offensive to many. Status Indians also often use the term *First Nation* to refer to band governments, another creation of the Indian Act. *First Nations* tends to be exclusive of Inuit and Métis. *Native* is a word that is starting to be seen as outdated and replaced by the word *Aboriginal*. *Native* implicitly embraces both status

and non-status Indians including the Métis. The term *Indigenous* has gained favor in international contexts, and although it is currently uncommonly applied in Canada, few Aboriginal people take issue with the word, and it is growing in popularity.

Many of the participants used terms interchangeably such as *Indian*, *Native*, *Aboriginal*, and *Nish* (Anishinaabe). The participants' own words in identifying themselves with the group were diverse although somewhat expected in a place such as Toronto. Traditionally a gathering place for many Aboriginal peoples, it continues to be an area shared by Iroquoians such as the Six Nations and Algonquians including the Mississaugas, Odawas, Ojibwe, and other Anishinaabek. The various terms, however, were certainly less important to the participants than what being Indian, or Native, or Aboriginal entailed.

The number of participants in this study was low, making the sample unrepresentative of the general population. However, it was not a goal of the research to find a representative sample. Aboriginal populations, and urban Aboriginal populations particularly, are difficult if not impossible to count or estimate accurately, which makes any attempt by conventional sampling procedures to find a representative sample unattainable. The chosen methodology of meeting in circle in small groups to discuss the issue of identity development was meant to elicit the complexity of this process, showing the limitations of academic theoretical approaches to the study of Aboriginal identity that focus on identities of Aboriginal people as static. The rich narrative data that was shared in this small-group setting demonstrated the importance of understanding how historical and regional contexts shape identity. This was in stark contrast to academic approaches that contain assumptions about unchanging definitions of Aboriginal identity. My belief that there are problematic limitations to definitional approaches to the study of urban Aboriginal identity development was confirmed as this study illuminated the process by which people are and become their cultural identities.

The research was about demonstrating these complexities as a counterpoint to the narrow kind of definitions of Aboriginality typified in acculturation and assimilation studies. Understanding the rich complexity of contemporary Aboriginal identities required an approach that provided for depth over breadth. As a result, I did not wish to begin with ideas of who or what an Aboriginal person was. Participants who self-identified as Aboriginal were invited to meet in circle to discuss what this identity meant to them. Through the circle meetings, stories (or *tipaacimowinan* in the language of Anishinabemowin, also known as Ojibwe) were told and became the basis for data analysis.

Of the seven men who attended the circles, three identified as Anishinaabe² (Ojibwe), one as Indigenous with Quechua roots and half Lebanese, one as Mohawk and Irish mixed, one as Oneida with Chippewa

blood, and one as mixed-blood Indigenous from El Salvador. Of the three participants who identified as Anishinaabe, David (all circle participants were asked to choose a pseudonym so that they might remain anonymous) described himself as having two parents with Ojibwe blood, and the other two participants described themselves as half Ojibwe and half French. George, the Indigenous participant with Quechua roots, explained that his father was Lebanese and had abandoned the family when he was a baby. For this reason he explained that he had always wanted nothing to do with his father and did not learn about this culture in his family. George had been immersed in Anishinaabe culture in Toronto because his friends were Anishinaabe, and he attended Anishinaabe-led sweats and ceremonies. He said that he would like to learn Quechua, but in Toronto one had to go with the Indigenous group that was here.

The Mohawk and Irish mixed Matthew was raised by his Mohawk mother and had limited involvement with his Irish-Canadian family. Randolph, who identified as Oneida with Chippewa blood, was adopted by an Oneida family at a young age. His biological parents were both Chippewa, and he had learned a great deal of Anishinaabe culture as part of his search for self. Romeo, from El Salvador, migrated to the city of San Salvador with his family at a young age, leaving the Indigenous community that was his birthplace where everyone was mestizo. He then moved to Canada to live with extended family at the age of 11. He continued to identify as Indigenous even as his brothers and sisters hid their cultural identities. This choice had led to estrangement from his family. Romeo had chosen to pursue Anishinaabe culture while in Toronto because he wished to support his Indigenous identity and believed that he should go with the culture of the people who were here.

All the participants spoke of seeking and incorporating Aboriginal, Indigenous, Native, or Indian culture in their own lives, and there was a sense of pan-Indian adoption of culture. Most were exposed to Anishinaabe culture above other Indigenous cultures because of its prevalence in Toronto. Randolph chose to blend his Oneida teachings with Anishinaabe teachings. Matthew felt that he could do more to learn his Haudenosaunee ways in particular, but felt a sense of solidarity with Indigenous people more generally. Through the circle process it became clear that participants accepted and incorporated Indigenous teachings and knowledge into their lives that were from First Nations cultures other than their own. The emphasis on whether something was Onkwehonwe or Anishinaabe was less relevant to participants than whether it was Indigenous.

Although it was not a requirement for participation in the study, it is important to note that all the men who participated in this research had some postsecondary education. As distinct as the participants' perspectives would be in any case, these participants would have a varied orient-

ation to the project because of their exposure to higher education. Fewer Aboriginal people in Canada have attended some college or university than the average Canadian, 47% compared with 52% (Malatest, 2002). It is difficult to say whether urban Aboriginal men with less formal schooling would have had similar experiences to those of the participants in these circles. In Ontario 46% of Aboriginal people have some postsecondary education compared with 56% of all Ontarians (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007). It could well be a reflection of greater education making one more open to participating in research or having more time to spare.

The research participants met for lunch at a space mutually agreed on as comfortable, and after eating, the circles began with a sweetgrass smudge. Each circle lasted three hours. The men's words were taped, transcribed, and sorted by themes. Although arrived at independently or inductively, the themes resembled a common medicine wheel teaching about how health, growth, and development can be represented (see Figure 1). The themes were collapsible into four significant "spheres of relations" or "levels" where Aboriginal identities were developed and learned: in self, in Aboriginal community, in non-Aboriginal society, and in family. By the level of self I mean to describe the internalization of preexisting stereotypes. The internalization may not be wholesale acceptance; indeed it was more often a resistant stance to the stereotypes in mainstream culture. However, it was not possible for any of the par-

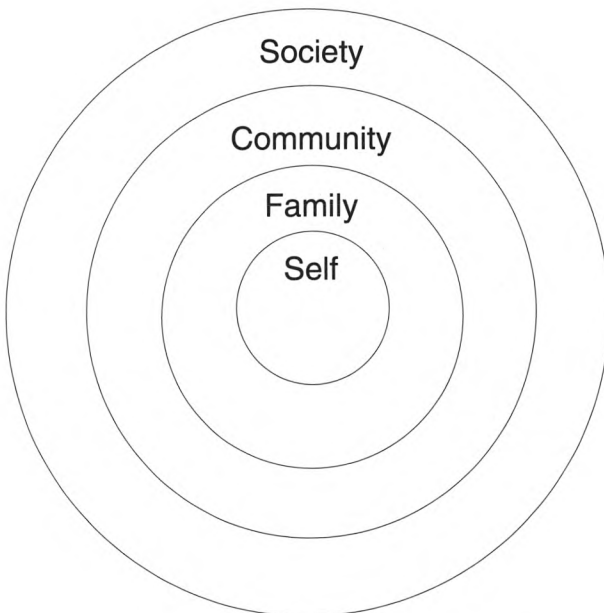


Figure 1. Spheres of influence of Aboriginal identity formation.

ticipants to live as if the stereotypes did not exist. They were forced to engage with them and adopted behaviors that demonstrated their interaction with and acceptance of and resistance to certain aspects of these behaviors (Restoule, 2004).

Aboriginal community is the disparate and dispersed set of activities, issues, places, and people to which the participants gave their time or resources and from which they received validation of their "proven" cultural identities (Restoule, 2004). In the outermost sphere of relations, in interactions with non-Aboriginal society, the participants learned how sometimes they were identified or seen as Aboriginal by others and often became aware of their difference from being *othered*. The primary locus of interaction with the non-Aboriginal society for the participants was in their formal education experiences. How these spheres of influence work to inform Aboriginal cultural identity development is more fully developed elsewhere (Restoule, 2004, 2005).

This leaves the area of family and its influences on Aboriginal identity formation, which is the focus of this article. I use the words of circle participants to demonstrate how the values that signify an Aboriginal identity continue to survive, passed on from generation to generation, even in the absence of sustained contact with ancestral communities. Aboriginal cultural values are ingrained in the families and are passed down such that they may be communicated and absorbed implicitly. This was true even in the case of families where the older generation was silent about its Aboriginal roots. Their reasons for silence are understandable given the increased expression of racism in the time of their initial migration to urban areas, a move often backed by policies and legislation repressive of Aboriginal people.

Repression, Migration, Assimilation, Resistance

Participants were asked in circle to share how the first generation of their family to reside in the city came to live there. Factors such as adoptions, residential schools, the Indian Act, and in Romeo's case an impending civil war acted on the participants' families in ways that caused them to describe their situation as one in which they did not fit in. For example, several of the participants said that their parents had left reserves to go to school or to find work. Two of the participants described their families' urban migration as a result of their mothers or grandmothers marrying non-Indian men and being disallowed to live on reserve. Non-Indian adoption of Indians in care was another factor mentioned in one case. One can see that in all these stories, state legislation had a hand in pushing the older generation off the reserve. In the cases of finding work and attending school, these factors are made more enticing by low employment on reserve, a situation traceable to Indian Act restrictions on economic development.

Yet in all these cases where the macro situation determined by the state forces movement at the micro level, the motivations for migration in the family narratives were located in family choices. Participants made statements such as "He decided to move away for work, and then stayed in the city." Romeo, whose family had fled El Salvador after family members were killed in the civil war, described being mixed-blood in San Salvador as "not fitting in," which is why they left. Thus he and the other men described their families' choices to move as motivated by economic and educational opportunities, whereas the underlying reasons may have originated in state repression of Aboriginal peoples. In Romeo's case the brutality of the state was quite direct, whereas in the cases of the Aboriginal people from territories inside Canada the state repression was enacted through the Indian Act, resulting in the effect of internal displacement but seemingly chosen as an option by the urban migrants.

The reasons for migration are significant because the movement in turn caused an initial separation of participants from their extended families and ancestral communities. The development of an Aboriginal identity, therefore, required a greater effort on the part of the participants to seek out the traditions, teachings, and communities. One by-product of this search among the current urban-raised generation is a greater sense of pan-Indian identity, which might explain why the group used the terms *Indigenous* and *Aboriginal* interchangeably even when they originated from territories throughout the Americas. This creation of an Aboriginal identity in diaspora is also characterized by silence among the older generation, who seek anonymity and the escape from public discrimination that it entails. The parents of two of the participants remained proud of their Aboriginal heritage and passed it on explicitly to their children through participation in Aboriginal cultural activities, stories, and food. The parents of the others were silent about their roots, but continued to instill Indigenous values in their children by example or through demonstration. Even when they stated or attempted to adopt non-Aboriginal ways and values, the core of being Indigenous was communicated.

This complex and somewhat paradoxical Aboriginal identity development is described by Jackson (2001), who observed the silence among parents of urban-raised Anishinaabeg. The urban-raised did not learn about their heritage from their parents in a straightforward way. "The elder generation conveyed a reticence on this topic that was readily perceived by the children—this was not a subject to be pursued. This was a topic on which they remain silent, as their parents remained silent." Yet they learned nonetheless.

Jackson (2001) talks about how Indian activities such as ash basket-making and axe handle carving were practiced. There was simply no remarking about its Indianness. Similarly, when Weiss (Weiss & McKenzie, 2000) interviewed three generations of Aboriginal women from

the Adnyamathanha of Flinders Range in South Australia and the Sechelt in British Columbia, the youngest women in both cultures spoke of never learning Indian things whereas elsewhere they recalled fondly how the family would pick berries and smoke fish. It is because the culture was lived that it was not seen as Indian. Practicing culture does not require being aware that one is doing so. In fact the culture is perhaps most secure when there is no explicit reflection on the activity as cultural. It is when the activity is engaged in as an active attempt to be cultural that it is perhaps already endangered or threatened. Aboriginal identity is strongest when cultural values and knowledge emerge organically from family activities.

For the first generation to move to cities, racism in society may have been more strongly pronounced, hence the silence of this generation about Aboriginal heritage. The younger generation raised in the city is more comfortable identifying as Aboriginal and struggles less with shame than their parents. For example, in Jackson (2002) an interviewee

talked about the shame and hardship many Indian people had experienced during the first three-quarters of the twentieth century that caused them to hide their identity even from their own children, as best they could. She pointed out that in some cases it is not the student's (or parents') fault that they have little connection to or knowledge of whatever American Indian ancestry they might have.

Their parents may have been motivated to hide identity to provide greater opportunities for their children. Now their children, with the confidence that comes from their improved education and economic security, are proud of their heritage but unaware of it. Fortunately, as demonstrated by one of the circle participants, as the younger generation pursues greater knowledge and comprehension of their cultural background, parents may start to open up and talk about what it is to be Aboriginal.

Aboriginal Identity and Family Closeness

The circle participants often spoke of their close relationship with their mothers. Two of the participants were raised primarily by their mothers. For example, Matthew explains,

With my mom and my brother, we have an amazing relationship. I'm very close with my mom, very close to my mom's side of the family. As far as that goes, right up to my grandmother. And then even the people. I have a relationship with my family that still lives on the reserve but we're not very close because my grandmother was segregated.

Matthew is referring to how his grandmother's marriage to a non-Indian required her to move off the reserve and away from her family. His on-reserve relatives resented his grandmother's leaving the territory, and his grandmother was disappointed with their resentment. To this day she refuses to set foot on the reserve.

George, also raised solely by his mother, speaks of her central place in his life, but also of the need to communicate his appreciation more often.

That's my community. And it starts right off with my mom. She's number one and then everybody else after that.... We're tight. If something ever happened to me my mom would be there. If something happened to her, I'd be there. But I think I could improve, tell you the truth, we don't hang out enough. Like we never go out together. We hang at home, you know? I took her for lunch last Friday for her birthday. It's the first time I've been out with my mom in years.

Before George was sober, his mother was often silent about Native history and issues.

[Native issues] wasn't really talked about in the household. No. Never. My whole family's basically colonized. We got the slave name "V _____." We, we're like, Catholic. Not me, but they're Catholic. Christmas. Easter, this weekend. It's all done the way the Spaniards do it, you know? Everything, you know? And that's the culture that they follow. Yeah. So, it's never really discussed. But when I bring it up, then it gets discussed.

But George credits his participation in Aboriginal ceremonies with keeping him out of trouble, which in turn increased his mother's openness about their Aboriginal roots.

She's taught me—she's told me stories that she knows like of the last, Inca, Tupac Amaru. Places in Peru that she's seen or that she would have liked to have seen. Just stuff like that. And then she asked me questions about what I do and she really—she's fascinated about sweat lodge ceremony. She thinks it's really cool. And she's always like, "So are you going up this weekend because [unintelligible] Next full moon" or if someone passes away, we go. She likes it. She sees it as something really positive. She's really happy about the non-drinking, and no cops coming to the door.

And we talk a lot about Native issues now. Because I've always been interested in our ancestors but I'm actually learning a bit from her because now I actually participate in Native ceremonies, and I've got some Native friends. Stuff like that so she's very understanding. She's very open, although she's Catholic as well. But she doesn't call me a pagan or a devil-worshiper or stuff like that. She likes what I do. She's really glad that I stopped drinking and I don't get into trouble. And a lot of it's because of the way I practice now. So I think that's actually helped us even get closer. Because I've changed, and so now, you know, now I'm in university too and stuff like that. We're good, but we could be better. We're on good. It's stable. It's a good strong foundation. I guess now it's time to build upon that foundation.

It is interesting that when George was not participating in ceremonies, he was getting in trouble, drinking, and his mother was not speaking of Native things. But when he cleaned up and started going to sweat lodge ceremonies, his mother asked about it. In George's case, a strong and secure identification with Aboriginal culture contributed to self and personal development. When the parents forget or try to forget their Aboriginal identity, it confuses the younger generation, who may fill the void with drinking. Ironically, Jackson (2002) speaks of how it was the older generation's forgetting of Aboriginal heritage that allowed the younger generation to experience socioeconomic advancement in the first place. Usually the second generation in the city realizes this truth and attributes their ability to identify securely and openly as Aboriginal people to changing attitudes in society.

Those in the first urban-raised generation, while having some sense of their Anishinaabe heritage while growing up in Riverton, were able to gain only a partial and often conflicted understanding of this aspect of their identity. On the positive side, though, they had many opportunities their parents had not had as children: they were educated in the regular school systems of Birmingham County, and some were able to go on to college, and even beyond.

Closeness to mothers is also mentioned by members of two-parent families. David talks about being closest to his mother: "Yeah, we're [my mother and I] the most alike I think, mentally. We have the same rage. (laughter) We have the same stamina." Randolph, who moved north to be with his biological mother and her family, spoke of how he expected to find more love in this relationship than the one with his foster family. He attributed to residential schools his foster family's lack of knowing how to love. The schools caused a disruption of family relations that continues today (Miller, 1996). Finding love for self and love from family are the first steps toward healing (Morrisseau, 1998), actions that Randolph took some years ago.

So I left that area and I came back to Canada and I was in search of my mother. My real mother. I still hadn't met her yet and I wanted to know who she was. What she looked like. What Mother's Day was all about, you know. And this family thing with Christmas, I never really experienced that in my whole life. I was always in constant search of love because I never received that, you know? And I never realized that until I had to deal with it further in my life, which I am now even.

Consistent through all these tellings is the importance of being loved. Randolph's desire for greater family unity was realized when his brother had gone through some traditional circle work.

But, you know, when we met, and I knew he [Randolph's brother] was going through these circles, and I knew he was going through these healings, but at the same time I was afraid to meet him again because inside I thought I was going to get fighting with him right off the bat you know, so "Holy Smokes! He's going to come back and we're going to go at it again." But then something, we just gave in. I looked at him and walked over to each other and hugged each other and I cried for about twenty minutes there. Because that was the first time he'd done that. And you know, from that time on I felt a real family caring and love in there, because that never happened in our family before and I went over and hugged my sister Teresa ... and that was the first time we ever really—her and I—had never done that before. And it was like we had our little three person circle there and we were all hugging each other.

Randolph partly attributes his difficult time connecting with his blood brother and sister to their foster family who had discouraged them from showing affection. His adopted parents were discouraged from using Aboriginal languages with the children and from displaying love. Compounded with their residential school upbringing, Randolph described life with his adoptive parents as harsh. It was denial of Aboriginal culture that caused much of the emotional distance in his family. Interestingly, it was the use of Aboriginal cultural circle work that enabled his family's emotions to be expressed.

Romeo felt disconnected from his family and wanted to be closer to them, but he continued to feel quite distant.

And with my family, we're all different, we all live apart. I have three other brothers living here in Toronto. I hardly speak to them. I hardly know them. Very distant. They're complete strangers. Like we don't know each other. I think I trust more one—be closer to one of my friends than I would to my brothers ... For some reason, somehow, it wasn't until we were in the city that we actually learned not to love each other. We somehow became distant. We used to be close in the little town, in San Marcos. But it was there we were actually making distance and just moving to Canada actually made us even more distant.

The rift is partly attributable to urban life because his family became more concerned with fitting in and getting by as recognized by the society around them. That is, Romeo describes it as getting the right car, house, bank account, and pursuing material things. To fit in also meant denying language and cultural background. Romeo felt that there was more to life, and his pursuit of further education was a cause of family tensions.

But if I do this, if I go to medical school, I'll be the first one in my family that will have that kind of education. None of my brothers graduated from university. They were working. That's how they see it. How they were taught.

Romeo believes that his family learned through schooling and society to accept their "place" as laborers and manual workers. Teachers in San Salvador taught them that Indians had no advancement opportunities and should not become *somebody*. Also, the Western ideologies of working for material possessions were ingrained in them from schooling. Again, Romeo sees this development as a denial of Indigenous concepts of community and extended family, which were once a strong part of the family identity when they lived in the Indigenous town of San Marcos before urban (and international) migration.

The pressures to assimilate changed his family, but the values he learned from them when he was young spurred him to seek out Aboriginal identity supports. They learned in their schooling where their proper "place" was as Indians and even as they turned their back on certain markers of Indian identity like language and culture in order to assimilate better, they tended to accept where on the socioeconomic ladder they were expected to be as Indians. Romeo spoke of how he had learned that wealth and professional jobs were the preserve of the European elites and that Indians should worry only about working to get a paycheck.

My upbringing made it appear that I wasn't supposed to become someone. It was basically just get through school so you can get a good job. That's how everyone did and, "Don't worry about getting good grades and all that. It doesn't matter." And anyway I struggled through work and school.... And just going to Kingston, I became so distant from my family and my parents, my brothers. It got to the point that I didn't even talk to them.

Romeo describes the pressures that his family put on him to leave university and get a "real" job. Being told that he was wasting his time

there, Romeo already felt torn between his devotion to school and his family ties. Furthermore, he was interested in learning about Aboriginal heritage, and his family was attempting to pass as non-Aboriginal to fit in with the society into which they had chosen to move. Romeo correspondingly felt further removed from his family. The refusal of family members to discuss their Aboriginal history caused Romeo to describe his family as having lost all their traditions and connections to Aboriginality. Many urban-raised Anishinaabek have made similar comments, as in the stories of three of the circle participants and the Riverton interviewees in Jackson's (2001) work. On closer examination, however, one finds that the values associated with Aboriginal cultures continue to be passed on in the family. Among the Aboriginal people in the present study, this phenomenon was often observed.

Aboriginal Values Carry Into Urban Areas

Whereas Romeo craved a closer connection to his family whom he felt had been corrupted by pursuing wealth, Matthew felt that his family was taught to value each other above material gain.

Asked about his family values, he said,

Well, I know it's not money. My family's not very wealthy. We've always been—well, had things. Never really had to worry about money, a lot. Unless I was skating which cost a lot. So I was working three jobs. So, it's not money. I think it would be family. I have a really strong relationship with the three people: my brother, myself, and my mom. We're very close and connected in many ways. My brother and I, probably more so through my mom, but we still share a very strong relationship. So I would have to say it's family. After education. I can't remember her ever stressing anything else.

Other values that were important to the participants' families and mentioned in the circles included ingenuity, honesty, hard work, ability to adapt, autonomy, and acceptance of multiple views. These particular values are often stressed in Aboriginal cultures (Benton-Banai, 1988; Bopp, Bopp, Lane, & Brown, 1989; Johnston, 1995). Specifically in the case of Anishinaabek culture (which describes the background or affiliation of five of the circle participants, excluding Randolph who is Chippewa by blood) are these values emphasized historically and into today (Hallowell, 1955, 1960; Hay, 1977; Hedican, 2001; Jackson, 2002; Valentine, 1995). I believe that the values instilled in and mentioned by the circle participants are the core and fundamental essence of Aboriginal cultures. Evidence of the vibrant continuity of Aboriginal cultures in urban areas lies in the emphasis that circle participants placed on the importance of these family-learned values in their daily lives. Brown (1969), studying Plains Indians, noted that the continuation of essential Aboriginal values in urban areas was contrary to prevailing views that Aboriginal people lost their culture when migrating to cities. The external highly visible symbols of that culture are not always obvious to non-Aboriginal people in urban areas. However, the internalized values and how they are lived and expressed

are a truer indication of cultural continuity, and they change to suit survival in a given environment just as they always have.

The importance of being able to adapt quickly to changes in one environment was historically valued in Ojibwe culture and continues to be so today. Valentine (1995) has written about how adaptability is central to contemporary Ojibwe culture. Things considered non-Indian, such as radio, newspapers, church, and so on are quickly taken up and made Indian in Ojibwe communities. Rather than ask, "Will adopting X compromise our Indianness?" Ojibwe people ask, "How can we use X Natively?" (Valentine). David mentioned ingenuity and ability to adapt:

I think my parents value honesty, and just work. A work ethic.... Ingenuity. My parents value, as they call it, Indianuity. (laughter) [group laughing]. We survived 16 years on the powwow trail because we constantly change the products that we're making. We take a strategic essentialist kind of view towards what we're selling. And we adapt. So it's that adaptation, survival, I guess that my family's great at.... [My parents] work 9 to 5 in Aboriginal, you know, organizations and they come home and then they work on their crafts. And my father goes out to the shed and makes stuff. We just made these—oh, this is interesting. My father's come up with a new product line this year. An aromatic cedar feathers. We're using the scraps from the cedar boxes that we're making, cutting them into a feather shape and then using them because they have an aroma to them, right? And, we're hoping that that'll be the thing that helps us pay our mortgage this summer. (Laughter). We got some other stuff, wooden toys and stuff like that. It's that ingenuity that my parents value.

As Jackson (2002) has demonstrated, this trait of adaptability has been carried into the cities by Anishinaabe people and has been applied in remarkable ways to urban survival. Similarly, Jackson has noted that her initial assumption that Anishinaabe factory workers in Riverton had supplanted their Anishinaabe identities in favor of proletarian ones had to be revised when one of her informants described his or her parents' loyalty to "the shop" as evidence of the Anishinaabe trait of working hard and taking satisfaction in doing a good job. Many of the first-generation urban-raised Aboriginals saw their parents' proletarianization as part of assimilation. One, however, saw dedication to work and commitment to family as being "a good Anishinaabe man." Essentially, the cultural values that once would have been part of a subsistence economy were transferred to a wage economy. The people were still as Anishinaabe as ever.

Another important Anishinaabe trait mentioned by Jackson (2002) is that of autonomy.

A feature closely related to the reluctance to speak in a new situation or with an unknown person is the aversion to asking direct questions. This is related to the high value placed on personal autonomy in the traditional Anishinaabe worldview, and the corresponding sense that to request something of someone is to risk infringing on that person's autonomy.

Brant (1990) also refers to this type of autonomy as "the principle of non-interference," and he recognizes it as a general trait among Native

people of the Americas. Jackson (2002) uses similar language in discussing Anishinaabeg autonomy:

Thus, Anishinaabeg avoid interfering with other persons in any way, and resent being interfered with by others, not only in actions, but in words as well—that is, Anishinaabe people do not generally question each other’s motives, second-guess one another, or offer unsolicited advice. If someone behaves strangely or makes a decision others see as foolish, the typical Anishinaabe response is, “that’s just his (or her) way.”

Several circle participants mentioned autonomy, and those who did not were quick to agree and signal their recognition of this trait as the following passages demonstrate. In the first example, autonomy is mentioned, and David seconds the importance of autonomy or non-interference.

I would probably think, autonomy. With my family. I know that whenever I would go to my mom or my dad for advice on something, it was almost always, “Whatever you want. Whatever you think is best, we’ll support you on it.” I always felt like, “God, why don’t they help me? They’re the ones who have experience in stuff like this.” But I think back now and I really appreciate the fact that they always gave me so much autonomy in all my decisions.

David: That’s something my family did too. Like when I decided to go to alternative school and “That’s your decision.” They never once penalized me when I got poor marks in school. They were like, obviously discouraged, but they never said, “Well it’s here. It’s your life.” Right? And then going into the stock market after school. Again, “It’s your life. We’d rather see you in university.” Like when we’d talk about it, you know, “It would be great if you had a degree.” But that’s about it. The way they’ve always been, it’s you make your own decisions and you deal with your own things. So autonomy’s probably another one for my family too.

In another circle autonomy came up again.

But actually, I think that’s what makes us strong. When they leave us alone and they basically tell us, fend for yourself. See what the world has to offer you basically. Yeah. You come to think better, I guess, and different.

And again autonomy was mentioned:

James: I’m glad that you raised acceptance because I always said for the longest time that I thought what my family was trying to teach me a lot was autonomy. Because I would go to them for advice on things and I would find that they would always say, “Well it’s up to you.” [Affirmation from group].

Randolph: Yeah. Yeah.

James: Oh my god! Why am I asking? And I think part of it though, is they wanted me to learn to trust myself in my decisions ... And to actually have my parents kind of say, “It’s up to you,” I did come to value that after so it was—but it is tied to that acceptance. They would accept what I decided even if I think they thought it was misguided, I think they trusted that I would realize that after a while. Or maybe that’s the way I needed to learn. And I think that I am grateful that they felt that. Because I see it now, and a lot of other people, they don’t have that.

Randolph: Yeah.

It must be noted that this type of assent was relatively rare during the circles. Participants generally remained silent until the speaker had relin-

quished his turn. To voice one's opinion during another's speech was a sign that they were strongly in agreement. The value of non-interference and respecting one's autonomy were often mentioned and firmly recognized.

Danziger (1991) wrote about this trait as one that developed historically in order to contribute to Indian community survival and noted its continuance in urban contexts a generation ago. "Kinship promoted personal respect besides sharing. Indian esteem took several forms. Men and women tolerated peculiarities if persons acted sensibly, and at intertribal activities major cultural differences could even be accepted. Respect also included non-interference." Confrontation was avoided if possible. Danziger found that these traits remained evident among urban Indians in Detroit in the 1970s and 1980s. These characteristically Indian values were often mentioned in our Toronto circles and were encompassed by many terms like *autonomy*, *non-interference*, *letting one be*, or simply *acceptance*.

When asked what values his family had taught him, Randolph answered "acceptance," which had many aspects to it that confirm the values mentioned by many other participants. Acceptance of what other family members did was implied in his answer, meaning that the value of family closeness was important. Randolph also talked of acceptance in a sense of respecting others no matter how different they are from you. At a couple of points in his answer, he made reference to the seven grandfather teachings, and in particular he stressed love and respect. The other teachings include Wisdom, Bravery, Honesty, Humility and Truth (Benton-Banai, 1988). How the teachings are often stated is: "To know Love is to know peace," and "To honour all of Creation is to have Respect" (Benton-Banai; Peltier, 2001). The grandfather teaching on Respect means a commitment to diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and behaviors. When Randolph talks about acceptance as letting people be, it sounds much like the teaching of Respect.

I think one of the greatest things that I value in my life personally. I think one of those things in my life that I value is to learn to accept. That word, acceptance. Because I never really looked at that before, like I say, that's one of the things that I learned. To accept. And it doesn't necessarily mean you have to believe it. And it doesn't necessarily mean you have to follow it 100%. It means you accept. And by accepting, it's just, you know, let it come into you and you deal with it, wherever it—in yourself. And I found out it was one of our traditional seven grandfather teachings. In fact, I was even more impressed that it was in there. Because that one word, acceptance is so important in our lives and in my life, is to accept. I believe that, in me, when I didn't have that acceptance I wouldn't be ready to carry on with anything in my life in the way of education, health, anything, you know, work, play, whatever you want to call it. People. Who I didn't accept. I wouldn't be worth being in town, because, I wouldn't be accepting nothing from anybody or I wouldn't be accepting anybody's ways or anybody's thoughts and feelings.

Randolph then shifted focus to accepting family and equated acceptance with family love. The grandfather teaching on Love often implies a protective love, a nurturing love, like that a parent provides for children. Later in

the passage Randolph's equating of acceptance with family love would call to my mind this particular grandfather teaching.

But I think that's all part of those two things, is it was really important in my life, is that the word, family love and that word, acceptance. Because those were two little things that I never dealt with and I was afraid to even touch. And it was, just like, too emotional, and too strong and you know, I could drown it with alcohol, I could drown it with drugs, you know. You get away from it. "Hell, you know, I don't want to deal with that." It's too mushy, you know. Someone might think I'm gay when I'm holding my brother you know and crying on his shoulders, whatever, you know. But then when I did that, you know what? There was other people I could do it with after that. I began to understand the community and I was able to hold them when they were crying. I was able to hold them when they were feeling weak. And I was able to approach them myself and let them know, you know, "I'm not feeling good now. I think I need somebody to talk to." I was much more—I broke down a whole big wall there between myself and the community and myself and my family and just anything wrong with me, I opened up more. And by opening up I released. I didn't release it in a negative way on them either. I released it in a way that they could understand that, you know. My true feelings were now there in front of me. And I think that was very important in my life to accomplish that. Because once I did that I was able to generate my thoughts on other things like going to school, like doing my homework once in a while. I was preparing myself for what I was going to get. What other problems were coming at me, you know. And that was part that I said, I never dealt with in my life is that family love and that family caring. And again with that word, acceptance. Those are two powerful things in my life.

The idea of family love and protective love is important in Anishinaabeg teachings and in other Aboriginal cultures.

Families taught many core Aboriginal values to the participants whether consciously or not. With noteworthy consistency over the 20th century, the intergenerational passing on of essential Aboriginal cultural values happens regardless of where the family is located vis-à-vis the greater non-Aboriginal society. To take an example from the Great Lakes over the past century, in the 1930s Hallowell (1955) compared three differentially acculturated groups of Ojibwa and found that they had not significantly shifted their psychological view of the world:

All the Ojibwa referred to, including the most highly acculturated group at Lac du Flambeau, are still Indians in a psychological sense, whatever the clothes they wear, whatever their occupation, whether they speak English or not, and regardless of race mixture. Although culturally speaking, they appear more and more like whites at "higher" levels of acculturation, there is no evidence at all for a basic psychological shift in a parallel direction.

Inspired by this finding, Hay (1977) studied Ojibwa concepts of self and found that diversely acculturated groups maintained a persistence of a uniquely Ojibwa personality similar to that described by the earliest writers on "northeastern Indians." Similarly, Jackson (2002) has noted that values among Ojibwa people have not altered significantly despite high urbanization. From the 1930s to the 1990s, Anishinaabek have maintained a remarkably consistent hold on their cultural values and psychological orientations. Whether the family intends to be silent about the culture or

openly embraces and accepts it, the values are so ingrained that they are not lost.

The above studies on urbanization show that migration has not threatened core Anishinaabe values and identities, and their authors took these examples to stand as metonyms for the persistence of more general Aboriginal values in the same geographical region. In my study, although it is limited to a small group of highly educated men, I found that this persistence of Aboriginal values in urban spaces continued to exist. There is also an underlying ethic shared among North American Indigenous cultures and world views (Brant, 1990) that enables Aboriginal people in the urban setting to feel little contradiction in internalizing and speaking to cultural values from First Nations other than their own. Their connection to the teachings of an Indigenous culture—any Indigenous culture—may be an indication that this similarity builds on a fundamental foundation laid in family relationships regardless of how strained they become. That Indigenous people crave learning from other Indigenous cultures is proof that this identity remains meaningful. In the conversations it was clear that the values identified by the men were also those that anthropologists remark on as being those of Indigenous people.

Conclusions

My focus was guided by the discussions of the research participants who chose to talk about their family relationships. Information on family structures was not analyzed. They told their own family stories, and although each was unique, remarkable common elements were to be found. First, the genocidal pressures exerted on Aboriginal families by governments were the main causes for urban migration. Second, Aboriginal values continue to thrive in spite of pressures to assimilate. Whether through residential schools, adoption, Indian Act provisions, or more brutal direct actions, governments have sought to eliminate the cultures of Aboriginal peoples. The family narratives that tell the story of urban migration often allude to this external assimilation, but ultimately explain the move as choices made by the families for reasons of economic or educational opportunities. For some families the stress of assimilative pressures was so forceful that they chose to be relatively silent about their Aboriginal identities.

For these seven men the core essential values that are Aboriginal continue to thrive in the urban setting. The values are crucial to identity more than the material signs of identity. One might say that it is the values that inform and underlie the visible expressions of the culture. Values historically associated with Anishinaabek in particular and northeastern Indians in general continue to persist in the present context. Among these values is the principle of non-interference, or autonomy, as well as the related traits of adaptability and ingenuity. Respect and love were also key values that continued to be esteemed and practiced. All these values were passed on

from one generation to the other in the family unit even when the older generation attempted to be silent about their background. The values are conveyed and subtly incorporated by the younger generation because the traits are well ingrained. Despite seeming separation from an Indigenous land base, Indigenous values continue to be stressed, lived, enhanced, and transformed in urban areas.

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Notes

¹I use *Aboriginal* in this article to refer to people who identify as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit in accordance with preferred terminology in much of Canada. *Aboriginal* is probably the least offensive general term to most people in Canada at the moment because it is the most inclusive. It is often used synonymously with another term, *Indigenous*, which may soon supplant *Aboriginal* in popular usage in the Canadian context. I use *First Nations* synonymously with *Indian*, *American Indian*, and *Native American*. In Canada the term *Native* is still often used, although less so in politically correct circles because of its implicit exclusion of the Inuit. In this article I choose to respect the use of terms as they appeared in the original source material. This includes using the terms verbatim that circle participants used in Toronto in 2003. For more information on preferred terminology in Canada, see Canada Communications Group (2002).

²*Anishinaabe* is the word Ojibwe speakers use to describe “the people.” Sometimes it refers to the original people of the land who speak Anishinaabemowin, an Algonquian language. Sometimes members of the Three Fires Confederacy, including the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi, refer to themselves as Anishinaabe. Sometimes the term *Anishinaabe* is used to refer to all original peoples, synonymous with *Indigenous* or *Aboriginal*. *Anishinaabek* is the plural form. *Chippewa* is here used synonymously with *Ojibwe* and was Randolph’s preferred usage.

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