Disenfranchised Spirit: A Theory and a Model

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with Harold Ross

Abstract

It has been well over twenty-five years since the 1985 amendment to the *Indian Act* provided individuals, once denied the right to Indian status registration due to the sex discrimination provisions, their entitlement. Despite this length of time there is a gap in the research and the literature that focuses on the transformational wellness potential of becoming entitled to Indian status registration. Through collaboration and case study analysis, this article argues that the abuse of colonial power gave Indian status registration concrete meaning for one Indigenous person and consequently held a role in their ability to live a good life. Disenfranchised spirit theory and the accompanying model, through the synthesis of identity theory, Anishinaabe understandings of the human spirit, and Indigenous scholarship on the effects of colonial power on identity and the human spirit, reveals the emotional and therefore spiritual wellness potential of having one's identity affirmed through Indian status registration. In offering disenfranchised spirit theory this article begins to fill a gap in the research.

Key Words: Canada, disenfranchised spirit theory, heart knowledge, identity, Indian Act, Indian status registration, sex discrimination, spirit

Introduction

> Identity is, of course, a key element of subjective reality, and like all subjective reality, stands in a dialectical relationship with society. (Berger and Luckmann, 1967, p. 173)

Some people think of Indian status registration with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC)[1] as merely an illusion created by the government of Canada. In my life, in the work I do, and through my critical introspections, I have come to appreciate that it is best to understand Indian status registration[2] not as an illusion, but rather as a fictional story, which, through systems of colonial power, has taken on meaning and spirit for many.[3]

Through colonization, the Government of Canada has and continues to dismantle Indigenous culture,[4] while imposing a legal definition of "Indian." This process continues to distort and deconstruct traditional Indigenous cultural meaning systems (see Castillo, 1997) of identity such as traditional naming systems and the clan system of governance. The manipulation and appropriation of traditional cultural meaning systems of identity and the imposition of Indian status registration as the source of one's identity have had, and for that matter continue to have, very real implications for healthy identity productions of Indigenous people and consequently the ability to achieve *mino-*

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1 Now called Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC).

2 Indian status registration is also the mechanism through which Indigenous people gain access to their treaty rights such as health care and education. For the most part a nonstatus Indian is not entitled to treaty rights protected during the 1764 Treaty at Niagara (Borrows, 2002; Gehl, 2011).

3 It has been argued that Indigenous people need to move beyond Aboriginal identity toward a more genuine Indigenous identity, and while I do value this, on the ground this is an ideal rather than reality. This article offers a grounded story.

4 The *Indian Act* criminalized Indigenous culture beginning in the 1880s (see Mathias and Yabsley, 1991). While this process ended in 1951, many lingering effects exist today.

pimadiziwin (the good life). For many people this remains the case today. In this way, the fictional story of "Indian," mediated through imposed systems and structures of colonial power, has become a lived out entity.[5]

Much has been written on the sex discrimination in the *Indian Act* and the amendments to the *Indian Act* that took place in 1985 and 2011 (see, for example, Bear, 1991; Gehl, 2004, 2005, 2006; Gilbert, 1996; Jamieson, 1978; McIvor, 2004; Miller, 2004; Monture-Angus, 1999; Silman, 1987; Stevenson, 1999; Wherrett, 1996). Despite the amendments, much sex discrimination continues (see, for example, Cannon, 2008; Day and Green, 2010; Eberts, 2010; Palmater, 2011). While this is the case, nothing has been written on the wellness potential for individuals who experienced identity restoration once the amendments entitled them to Indian status registration.[6] Certainly the question, "Does gaining Indian status make a difference in one's ability to live a good life?" is worthy of exploration. It has been over twenty-five years since the 1985 amendment, and there must be stories that are illustrative and worthy of telling. After all, why did Mary Two-Axe Early, Jeannette Corbiere-Lavell, Yvonne Bedard, Sandra Lovelace, and Sharon McIvor (see Gehl, 2006) work to assure that they, their children, and their grandchildren gain Indian status registration? This is the knowledge gap that this article begins to fill.

Operating through a personal relationship, and existing on the continuum of collaboration, this article offers a case study analysis of Harold (Skip) Ross' story. Both Skip and I self-identify as Algonquin Anishinaabe[7] from the Ottawa River Valley. Through our combined effort, Skip eventually gained Indian status registration through the 1985 amendment to the *Indian Act*. While the archival research required took place several years ago, offering Skip's story today illustrates the long-term wellness implications of having one's identity restored through entitlement to Indian status.[8]

I begin this article with an analysis of Western theorists' positions on identity. I then offer an analysis of Anishinaabeg perspectives of the human condition that value the emotional[9] and spiritual dimensions. With the help of Indigenous scholarship I then link colonial power to Indigenous identity destruction and its effect on the human spirit. Moving on, I offer a story about Skip's quest for Indian status registration and our archival research proving his entitlement to First Nation band membership. From these Western identity theories, Anishinaabeg understandings of the human condition where heart knowledge is valued,[10] the effects of colonial power on Indigenous identities, and Skip's story, I synthesize a theory and model that illustrate his powerful transformation to living a better life. I have titled this theory and model "Disenfranchised Spirit" and through it illustrate how Indian status registration took on real meaning for Skip and thus cradled the transformational power needed for him to live a better life.

I (Lynn) was the primary archival researcher[11] in this project while Skip was my "assistant." I was also the primary writer of this article and creator of the theory and model of disenfranchised spirit. It is important to stress, however, that Skip read several drafts of this article, offering suggestions along the way, and giving his final approval. In this way, this work was a collaborative effort.

Western Theories of Identity

Through his academic work, Stuart Hall distinguished three common theories of identity: the en-

5 Although many First Nations are now establishing citizenship codes, there are still many situations where Indian status registration, band membership, and citizenship are synonymous. It must be appreciated that a shift of discourse does not mean an ideological shift. For example, I (Lynn) am denied Indian status registration and consequently band membership and citizenship (Gehl, 2006). Certainly disenfranchised spirit theory can be generalized to situations of the denial of citizenship.

6 Statistics Canada reports that by the end of 2002, more than 114,000 individuals gained status registration through the 1985 amendment (O'Donnell and Wallace, 2012). It has been estimated that through the 2011 amendment as many as 45,000 grandchildren of Indian women once enfranchised for marrying out will gain the right to status registration (O'Donnell and Wallace, 2012).

7 "Anishinaabe" translates to "original person" and "Anishinaabeg" translates to "original people".

8 The knowledge in this article unfolded through a broad Anishinaabe methodological framework where the methods and practices were collaboration, case study, archival research, textual synthesis, and introspection.

9 In this article, the emotional dimension of the human condition and heart knowledge are used interchangeably.

10 For an in depth discussion of the role of heart knowledge in establishing "truth" in the Anishinaabeg tradition, see Gehl (2012).

11 This article emerges in part from my Master of Arts thesis, see Gehl (2005).

lightenment subject, the sociological subject, and the postmodern subject. According to Hall, the enlightenment subject is both centred and unified, and is gifted with the ability to reason. The enlightenment subject also has consciousness and the ability to act on it; their inner core is present at birth and unfolds autonomously with maturity. With the sociological subject, there is a shift. Here, a person's inner core is contingent on family and community relationships, as well as social interaction. With the sociological subject, the gap between the self and other members of society is bridged as the subject is sutured into various social structures. In terms of the postmodern subject, it is Hall's contention that the structural changes that began transforming the world also transformed people and our identities. Hall contends the continuous changes brought on by globalization, where no single fundamental articulating organizing principle exists, are also changing people. Therefore, he argues, the postmodern subject has no fixed, essential, or permanent identity. Rather, within us are contradictory identities pulling in different directions (Hall, 1992, pp. 273–99).

Hall (1988) further argues that one's ethnicity is a critical component of one's subjective sense of who one is, in that inherent in ethnicity is one's history, language, and culture. That said, although Hall does not deny the value of strategic political essentialism, where members of a group bond through their ethnicity to challenge systems of oppression, as a strategy of political resistance, he does challenge the practice of always reducing individuals to an essential subject (see Hall in Yon, 1999). In this way, and despite what may appear to be a contradiction, Hall remains an ardent antiessentialist, meaning he does not agree with the practice of reducing a person's entire being to a rigid and narrow definition through, for example, policy or law.

Hall also theorizes identity as a production that unfolds, where power shapes who we are. Specifically, he argues, there is the need to understand identity as a fluid production that is rooted in history and politics and thus mediated by power. In particular, he maintains, identities emerge within the play of specific modalities of power (Hall, 1996, p. 4). Speaking from his experience as a Black man living in England, Hall expresses the horrors of issues with identity control by powerful others. This is applicable to the Indigenous experience in Canada, when he argues the inner expropriation of cultural identity by others "cripples and deforms"[12] (1990, p. 226).

Richard Jenkins (2000) also theorizes identity. He stresses that although some may treat identity as something that one has, or is born with, like Hall he theorizes identity as a process of becoming, or as a production. Jenkins' foundational template of identity production consists of an internal-external dialectic of relationships. Emily A. Schultz and Robert H. Lavenda (1998, p. 22) describe this as "a network of cause and effect, in which the various causes and effects affect each other" where "the properties of parts and wholes *co-determine* one another" (emphasis in original). In this way, Jenkins asserts, identity is never unilateral. Rather, it is within the dialectic of both primary and subsequent socializations that individuals come to define and redefine who they are. In this way, identities are relational and fundamentally dependent on one another in that "what people think about us is no less important than what we think about ourselves" (Jenkins, 2000, p. 21). Jenkins stresses, "It is not enough to assert an identity. That identity must also be validated (or not) by those with whom we have dealings. *Social identity is never unilateral*" (p. 21, emphasis in original). Further, and again similar to Hall, Jenkins appreciates that politics and power are central to one's identity formation and production. It is his contention that it is within institutions and organizations that specific individual identities are bestowed and flow. It is in this way that Jenkins stresses, "the capacity to exercise self-determination ... is systematically related to wealth, in terms of both material and cultural resources" (2000, p. 174).

In sum, although theories of identity have shifted, through Hall and Jenkins we learn identity is best understood as a production that unfolds throughout one's life, shaped by social relationships, and by and through systems of power. When one understands identity in this way — as a fluid production

12 As a person with a disability, I find these terms offensive. Contradictorily, though, I also see the usefulness. I apologize if my use of these terms offends the reader.

that unfolds, shifts, and changes within a context of relationships mediated by power — it becomes apparent why Hall discourages essentialist practices that reduce identity to a narrow rigid definition.

Having offered these Western theories of identity, in the next section of this article I turn to Anishinaabe understandings of the human condition. These value the emotional and spiritual realm of who we are as human beings and the role they have in our identity productions. I also offer an analysis of what Indigenous scholars have concluded about the relationship between colonial power, Indigenous identity productions, and the spiritual implications.

Anishinaabe Theories of the Human Condition

> The Indian Act was repeatedly used to destroy traditional institutions of Indian government and to abolish those cultural practices that defined Indian identity. (Mathias and Yabsley, 1991, p. 36)

Through his ethnographic research, Diamond Jenness (1935) argues the Anishinaabeg[13] are more spiritual than European peoples. According to Jenness, the Anishinaabeg understand themselves as consisting of both a body and a soul, where the soul, located in the heart, is capable of traveling outside the body for brief periods of time. Jenness also suggests the Anishinaabeg understand the soul, and thus the heart, as the intelligent component of the human condition where reason occurs, which therefore facilitates an understanding of the world. Despite this wandering ability of the soul and the role of the heart in the knowing process, it is warned that illness occurs if the soul fails to return to the heart, as the soul and heart must work in harmony with the body for an individual to live a good life. Jenness also states that while insane people have lost their souls, and thus the intelligence of their hearts, and are without the ability to reason, intoxicated people have only temporarily lost their soul and heart intelligence (Jenness, 1935, pp. 18–28; see also pp. 90–111).

A. Irving Hallowell (1971) also provides an Anishinaabe explanation of the human soul. Similar to Jenness' observations, Hallowell states that when an Anishinaabe child is born it is believed that the child consists of both a body and a soul, where the soul has moments of independent existence. The Anishinaabeg believe the soul has the ability to leave the body during sleep and can and will occupy different positions in both time and space. In this way, the body and soul are not necessarily always synonymous. Hallowell, in line with Jenness, also explains that the soul has a fundamental role in establishing a good life. The Anishinaabeg believe death can occur when and if the soul leaves the body for too long a period of time. In the Anishinaabeg tradition, soul loss explains untimely or unanticipated deaths (Hallowell, 1971, pp. 172–82).

In contemporary Anishinaabeg understandings of what it means to be a human being, it is often said that humans consist of four interconnected components: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. It is further understood that the spirit emerges through one's heart. This significance of the heart is in line with older ethnographic accounts. Thus, as in the past, the Anishinaabeg continue today to recognize the importance of the emotional and spiritual realm in terms of health and wellness. Within this understanding, it is said that healthy individuals manifest when all four of these components are appreciated, allowed to actualize, and kept in balance. This wholistic philosophy of the human condition is often symbolized in the contemporary world as the Medicine Wheel, where the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual components of the human condition are equally represented. Contemporary Anishinaabe traditional teacher and leader Edward Benton-Banai speaks about this wholistic understanding of the human condition when he argues healing has "to take place not only in a physical sense but in a spiritual sense as well" as the body and spirit[14] have to be treated together in order to be effective (1988, p. 57).

While Indigenous people have their own understanding of the human condition, what healthy individuals consist of, and by extension Indigenous identity, in her research Bonita Lawrence (2003) speaks about the implications of what Canada has

13 Jenness and Hallowell worked with the Ojibway who are one nation of the larger Anishinaabeg Nations situated around the Great Lakes regions of what is now called Canada and the United States.

14 In this article, it is best to understand the words "soul" and "spirit" as the same.

done to Indigenous identity productions. In exploring Indigenous identity and its relationship to colonial power, Lawrence argues, laws "defining and controlling Indianness have for years distorted and disrupted older Indigenous ways of identifying the self" (2003, p. 4). Lawrence further argues, as a regulatory regime, the *Indian Act* has manufactured such pervasive ways of understanding Indigenous identity that at the community level they have become internalized and thus naturalized. Lawrence's work brings to the fore how Indigenous identity in Canada has been mediated by and through an abuse of colonial power. Interestingly, in her decision in the recent Sharon McIvor case, Justice Ross of the British Columbia Supreme court is in agreement of the role and meaning that Indian status registration has taken on. In her ruling, Justice Ross argued that the "concept of Indian" has come to exist as an important component of one's identity, cultural heritage, and one's sense of belonging (in Eberts, 2010, p. 31). Lawrence's argument and Justice Ross' statement illustrate that colonial power has distorted Indigenous identity. This concurs with Hall's and Jenkins' views on power.

In their research Eduardo Duran and Bonnie Duran have also concluded the origin of dysfunction of community people is firmly rooted in the colonial process. More particularly, they argue, colonization has systematically inflicted "a wound to the soul" that is "felt in agonizing proportions to this day" (Duran and Duran, 1995, p. 27). Duran and Duran concluded that the only meaningful construct that applies to this dysfunction is "soul wound" (1995, p. 24). This identifies the emotional and spiritual realms as being affected. Val Napoleon makes a similar observation when she argues the process of colonization in Canada has been "soul-crushing," with many First Nations dealing with addiction, poor health, and unemployment (2005, p. 41).

In sum, Jenness and Hallowell agree that the Anishinaabeg consider human beings to be a combination of both body and soul, where the soul, which is located in the heart, is viewed as holding the intelligent or rational dimension of the human condition. Alternatively stated, the soul and heart serve in our understanding of the world. Further, the Anishinaabeg worldview encompasses the potential for soul loss[15] as an explanation of sickness and, at times, unexpected death, while intoxication is a form of temporary soul loss and thus the loss of one's ability to reason and live well. In this way, the health of an individual depends on a presence, a balance, and the appreciation of both one's soul, which is located in the heart, and one's body. Contemporary Indigenous teacher Benton-Banai (1988) concurs with the significance of the emotional and spiritual realm in human health. Specifically, all four components of the human condition — physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual — must be present and in balance if one is to remain healthy. Despite Hall's warning on the dangers of identity essentialism, Lawrence's work informs us that the government of Canada has distorted the lives of Indigenous people and their identity productions through the imposition of an essential legal definition of "Indian." As Lawrence has explained, "Indian" as it is defined in the *Indian Act* has taken on meaning at the community level and has proven destructive to the human psyche. Justice Ross agrees, as do Duran and Duran, and Napoleon who rely on the constructs "soul wound" and "soul crushing" to explain the effects in their communities.

In the next section I introduce Harold (Skip) Ross' ancestry, his identity struggle due to processes of colonization and imposition of the *Indian Act*, our joint archival research project, his process of gaining Indian status registration, and consequently his recovery from alcoholism.

Harold (Skip) Ross' Story

Contrary to what many here in Canada may think about Indigenous people — that we all live in First Nation reserve communities or descend from First Nation reserve communities — Harold (Skip) Ross knows otherwise. Skip was born in 1932 on the banks of the Petawawa River, traditional Algonquin Anishinaabeg territory (see Day and Trigger, 1978; Sarazin, 1989). Skip says his parents were not interested in living on the reserve at Golden Lake. Apparently, his parents were concerned with several

15 It should be noted here that a "traditional knowledge holder" has informed me that humans cannot lose their soul. While this may have been the case traditionally and prior to colonization, I do not think this is true today.

issues such as leaving their main source of subsistence along the Petawawa River, being narrowly defined by the colonial system as status Indians, as well as concerned that the residential school system could take away their children.

Despite Skip's family history and their very real fear, operating within a different colonial temporal context, on 3 May 1999 he submitted his application to INAC for Indian status. Skip was inspired to become officially registered as a status Indian after members of his extended family were registered through the 1985 amendment to the *Indian Act*. While many people have criticized the limitations of the 1985 legal remedy, many women once disenfranchised (meaning they lost Indian status registration) because they married non-Indian men can now be reinstated as status Indians (Gilbert, 1996; Monture-Angus, 1999; Gehl, 2006). The 1985 amendment also meant that many other people who were never registered could now apply, Skip included. When I met him, Skip told me he had been working on the application process for well over ten years.

On 26 April 2000, INAC responded to Skip's application with a letter asking for his maternal grandmother's, Sarah Jocko (possibly Plouffe), marriage certificate. The request further stated, "In the event she was never married, I [INAC] will then require a letter from Vital Statistics confirming that a search has been made for a marriage" through 1907–1912 (INAC, personal communication). So in order for Skip to gain Indian status through Sarah, he had to prove that his mother, Idi Plouffe, was born outside of the institution of marriage. Sarah's maiden name was Jocko and her daughter Idi Plouffe was born on 9 November 1912. The way Skip describes this seemingly backward request is best: "They want me to look for something that I am hoping is not there" (personal communication). I agreed with Skip; it was a ridiculous request. Regardless, INAC further informed Skip that he would have to search the vital statistics records under the names Jocko (also the spellings of Jacco and Jacque), Jacob,[16] and Plouffe as Gerald Plouffe was Idi's biological father (see Figure 1 below).

Sarah Jocko was born in 1892 and both of her parents, Skip's great-grandparents, Jean Baptiste

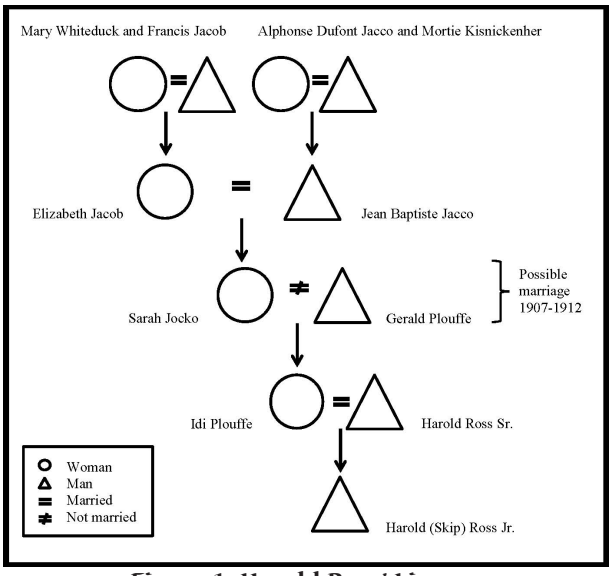

Figure 1: Harold Ross' Lineage

Jacco and Elizabeth Jacob, were considered Indians. As a child of Indians, although Sarah was not officially registered, at the time of her birth she was also considered an Indian. When Sarah Jocko gave birth to Idi Plouffe, she was not married to the child's father, Gerald Plouffe. Through the oral tradition, Skip understands Gerald to be an Algonquin from Quebec and this is all Skip knows about him.

I met Skip in the spring of 2000, possibly in April, at the post office in Golden Lake, Ontario after a meeting that focused on the Algonquin land claims and self-government process. This was one year after Skip submitted his application to INAC. As Algonquin, we were both learning about our family lineages for the purposes of meeting the criteria of Indian status registration and Algonquin Enrolment Law,[17] the latter being an application process used to identify nonstatus Algonquin for the purpose of the land claims and self-government mandate. In my process I was at the stage of conducting the necessary archival research. Skip was not. This Indian registration process required me to tie my father, grandmother, grandfather, and great-grandmother to a male ancestor who was once considered an

16 INAC requested that the research be inclusive of both Jocko and Jacob. Jacob is the maiden name of Sarah's mother. Also, often times the surname Jacob and Jocko are used interchangeably.

17 It is important for readers to understand that both Skip and I have left the Algonquin land claims and self-government process. I (Lynn) left because through my doctoral work I now fully understand that the process is colonial. Skip's reason is that the process is wrought with too many issues.

Indian. I was also trying to fulfill the ¼ blood quantum requirement for Algonquin Enrolment Law[18] (Gehl, 2006, 2004).

It turns out that Skip and I have a common Jocko ancestor. His name was Alphonse Dufont Jacco. While Skip is a fourth generation descendant of Alphonse through Jean Baptiste Jacco; I am a fifth generation descendant through Angeline Jocko. When I heard Skip's story about what he was trying to accomplish, it resonated. After considering the commitment seriously, shortly after our spring meeting I agreed to do the necessary archival research for Skip. The vital statistics research that INAC requested required archival research as the Registrar General of Ontario only holds birth, marriage, and death records for ninety-five, eighty, and seventy-five years respectively (Archives of Ontario). After these time periods, the records are archived. Since we were interested in a possible marriage record that was eighty-eight through ninety-three years old, it could only be obtained through the Archives of Ontario.

Although through observation I knew Skip was struggling with an alcohol addiction and therefore, as Jenness and Hallowell explain, an inability to reason to his fullest capacity, I insisted that he come along to witness and participate in the archival research project. This may be viewed by some people as an unreasonable request, but I felt strongly that Skip had to be there. I wanted to embody within him the knowledge of what I was willing to undertake for him, as well as a sense of respect for the archival research process. Through years of introspection and my background in medical anthropology, I knew that our archival research project was potentially endowed with deep meaning and thus also cradled in part the knowledge and spirit that could change Skip's life. I knew I needed to involve his agency into the process. Within a few weeks, again in the early spring of 2000, Skip and I set a date to meet in Toronto at 77 Grenville Street. Although I lived in Toronto, Skip had to take a bus from Pembroke, Ontario. Skip arranged to stay with his nephew, Terry, who lives in Toronto.

I scheduled our day of archival research on a weekday, 29 May 2000, and during office hours as I felt it was best for me to have a trained archivist on hand to help me with any questions that arose. Furthermore, as per INAC's request, I had to have an archivist validate that the vital statistics research was done correctly. That said, in Ontario, for the most part, each marriage registration is arranged by year and is assigned an identifying number. The registrations are then indexed by year and in alphabetical order. Because the names of both the bride and groom are indexed, a search can be carried out under either name. To cover the different name spellings of the potential bride and the potential groom, we had to search the indexes for Jacob, Jocko, and Plouffe.

As INAC indicated in Skip's letter, the specific marriage record that we were looking for possibly took place from 1907–1912. These index records were part of the RG 80-7-0-18 series. Jacob and Jocko marriages were microfilmed on MS934 reels #4, #9, and #10; Plouffe marriages were microfilmed on MS934 reels #6, #9, and #10. With Skip as my "assistant," we researched for about four hours, making double photocopies along the way of all marriages between people whose surnames began with "J" and "P." Skip supplied the rolls of quarters for the printers. Fortunately, we did not find a marriage indexed for Jacob, Jocko, or Plouffe. In this way, odd as this sounds, we were successful in not finding a marriage record between Sarah Jocko and Gerald Plouffe. After the archival research was completed, and the archivist notarized the photocopies, Skip and I had a quick lunch and parted ways. Skip paid for lunch.

Wasting no time, later that night, and on Skip's behalf, I wrote and emailed him a letter for INAC. This letter gave me permission to manage his INAC file. I asked him to print off the letter, sign it as soon as possible, and snail mail it to INAC. I then wrote another letter to INAC and enclosed the vital statistics records that indicated that no marriage between Sarah Jocko and Gerald Plouffe had taken place during the years 1907–1912, indicating that Idi was born out of wedlock. Within this second letter I also requested that Skip's file be expedited as he was over the age of sixty-five. I simply did not want Skip to gain Indian status posthumously. Certainly this has happened before (Gehl, 2006). INAC complied.

A few weeks later, on 19 June 2000, I called INAC to inquire about Skip's application for status and I

18 The blood-quantum criterion was eventually changed to descent only.

was given the good news. I quickly called Skip and passed on the message that we were successful in our research and he was now entitled to be registered as a status Indian as per subsection 6(2) of the *Indian Act*.[19] After I gave Skip the news, he wasted little time sending me an email. I offer elements of this email here because Skip's words are illustrative of the very real significance that Indian status has for a seventy year old gentleman. In this email, Skip celebrated:

> My whole family loves and respects you, even the ones who were already status. They were all hoping and praying for me and you did it all. I will be forever grateful to you. You are now part of my family. I can never thank you enough. Without you I would not have my identity!

Sure enough, the next day, on 20 June 2000, Skip received a letter from INAC confirming the good news. This letter provided the address where Skip could obtain his Certification of Indian Status: Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation. Skip was also told that Pikwàkanagàn determines their membership and he would have to apply with them if he was interested. Shortly after, Skip became a band member as Indian status meets Pikwàkanagàn's requirement.[20]

On 18 August 2000, the Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn hosted a gathering titled "Honouring Chief Tessouat." The gathering was operating under the land claims and self-government mandate that had been ongoing since the early 1990s, and was an effort to unite status and nonstatus Algonquin (see *Renfrew Mercury*, 2000). Skip and I were told that there was an opportunity for Algonquin to speak at this gathering, and Skip asked me to help him construct something that he could read. Acting collaboratively, in part Skip's speech read,

> Until a few weeks ago, I was a member of the nonstatus community here on the Ottawa River watershed. I was born and raised here and I always knew that I was an Indian and yet I could not prove it. Thanks to my friend Lynn and the work she did to make me a status Indian, I can stand here today and say I am no more Indian today than I was yesterday.

On 29 August 2001 Skip had his last drink and shortly after he offered tobacco to a traditional person requesting his spirit name: River Man Running. With his identity now affirmed and no longer drinking, Skip is able to live a more productive life. Today he diligently works to protect the Petawawa River, the very river he was born, raised, and subsisted on, from being dammed to produce two hydroelectric generating stations known as "Big Eddy" and "Half Mile Rapids" that are scheduled to be constructed in 2013 (Skip Ross, personal communication; see also Pappin, 2003; Kruzich, 2011). The construction of these dams, Skip argues, will place two endangered species at risk: the American Eel and the Lake Sturgeon (MacGregor et al., 2011; see also Environment Canada, 2009; Millington, 2011). Skip asserts these species require a safe passage up and down the Petawawa River, as it is only through their passage that they are able to live the ancient knowledge they are born into. This is the knowledge that these species have performed long before European people, and for that matter all human beings, came to Turtle Island. It is precisely for this reason that Skip implores the Ministry of Natural Resources to "drop all plans for development of the Petawawa River" (personal communication). In this way, although Skip was "no more Indian today than I was yesterday," becoming registered as a status Indian has changed his life.

Having offered this discussion of western theories of identity as well as Anishinaabe understandings of what it means to be human, where emotional and spiritual knowledge is recognized, along with Indigenous scholarship on the effects of colonial control and the manipulation of Indigenous identity as causing an effect on the human soul, and further in adding Skip's experience as a case study, in the next section of this article I synthesize these elements into disenfranchised spirit theory. Disenfranchised spirit theory serves to illuminate and bring clarity to Skip's story.

19 Status Indians are now registered under subsection 6(1) or subsection 6(2) of the *Indian Act*. As a 6(2) status Indian, Skip is unable to pass on Indian status to his daughter (Gehl, 2006).

20 Two of Skip's siblings, Dan and Emily, also gained Indian status registration and band membership as the same archival documents applied to their applications as well.

Disenfranchised Spirit: Offering a Theory and a Model

In articulating disenfranchised spirit, I rely on Hall and Jenkins' thoughts that identity is a production which unfolds within a larger context of social relationships that is mediated by and through power. I also draw from Hall's warning against the practice of identity essentialism: that it has the power to harm. In disenfranchised spirit theory, the *Indian Act* definition is the essentialism that, as Hall has suggested, holds the capacity to cripple and deform. I also draw on Jenness and Hallowell's ethnographic accounts with the Anishinaabeg, Benton-Banai, and Duran and Duran's discussions of an Indigenous understanding of the self — a conceptualization that values the human spirit and heart knowledge as holding the capacity of reason (also intelligence) and human agency, and by extension that holds a fundamental role in one's ability to live a good life.

In the model, (see Figure 2 below) the circle represents a typical identity production. The circle is chosen because it is an Indigenous organizing principle that is rooted in an Indigenous worldview. The four quadrants within the circle represent the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual components of the human condition. This echoes the Medicine Wheel, a significant cultural meaning system of Indigenous identity and wellness. The arrows represent normal identity production, a process that unfolds throughout life. The disenfranchising potential of an essentialized discourse of identity (in this case a legal definition of Indian) is represented as a narrow rigid point below. This narrow point represents the location where a person who is denied identity production, due to an imposed essentialized definition, is trapped by a pain felt so deep it leads to a soul wound. Constructive agency and thus a healthy identity production is lacking.

Although Indian status registration did not make Skip more Indian, it gave him "the license and freedom" he needed to be who he is. The external element of the internal-external dialectic was gained through Indian status registration. Alternatively stated, the lack of external affirmation of who he thought he was internally resulted in a state of spiritual disenfranchisement. As a result he lacked the intelligence of his heart knowledge and therefore constructive agency to move forward in his identity production. In essence, Indian status registration took on real meaning for Skip — without it he was trapped. In agreement with disenfranchised spirit theory, in his own words he adds:

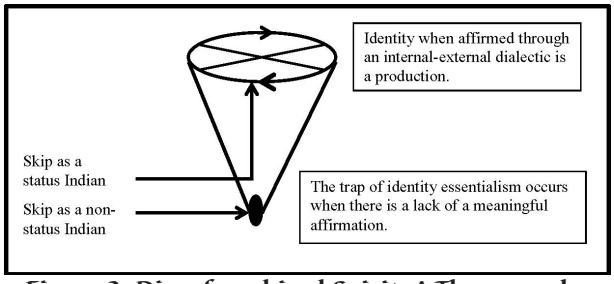

Figure 2: Disenfranchised Spirit: A Theory and a Model

> Although the *Indian Act* is made up by the Government of Canada, the denial of who I was as an Algonquin Indian was spiritually hurtful and therefore spiritually harmful. Once I became entitled to Indian status, the Algonquin Indian I felt in my heart was affirmed, and this gave me both the motivation and the reason to quit drinking and move on with my life. (personal communication)

It is from this that disenfranchised spirit theory obtains its name. Disenfranchised spirit theory encompasses the relationship between the need for external validation (in this case the Registrar of Indian Affairs and Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation), an internal sense of self, identity production, an abuse of power, the trap of essentialism, the spirit and the intelligence of heart knowledge, agency, and overall well-being.

In summary, as illustrated in disenfranchised spirit theory, once Skip was affirmed as an Indian as defined by the *Indian Act*, the intelligence of his heart was animated, he was able to move out of the trap of essentialism, become more productive with his agency, and move on with his life's production as an Algonquin Anishinaabe. Within a year of receiving Indian status, no longer spiritually disenfranchised, Skip gave up drinking and converted the "booze room" in the basement of his home into what he calls "my own personal cultural centre," a

source of personal empowerment (personal communication).

We are aware that some people may criticize disenfranchised spirit theory because Skip and I do not explicitly illustrate a relationship between Canada's essentialized definition of Indian and Skip's alcoholism. Rather, we make a connection between identity affirmation and his recovery. Our response to this is that our goal in writing this article, and in offering this theory, is for the purpose of illustrating how identity affirmation holds the power to shape personal agency. Further, some people may wonder why we did not title this synthesis "Enfranchised Spirit theory" as this name is more in line with the way we linked identity affirmation, spiritual wellness, and healthy identity production. To honour the ancestors before us, and the people living today who continue to be denied their identity due to an abuse of colonial power, we have decided to name it "Disenfranchised Spirit theory."[21]

In no way are we proposing or arguing that the only way to gain the external identity affirmation needed to live a good life is through registration as a status Indian. Certainly there are other ways to have one's identity affirmed such as receiving one's traditional name, clan, song, and colours. This article shares Skip's story, and through this sharing process may give others insight into the effects of colonization, the *Indian Act*, identity control, identity denial, soul loss, the wellness potential of identity affirmation, and the role heart knowledge and the soul has in one's identity production and one's ability to live *mino-pimatiziwin*.

To this end, we do not claim to resolve all the issues the theory puts forward. Rather, it is intended to offer and encourage consideration of the dangers of an inner expropriation of cultural identity that generations of colonial governments in Canada have unleashed in Indigenous communities.

Conclusion

Disenfranchised spirit theory follows Hallowell and Jenness' observations: in an Anishinaabeg worldview there is a relationship between the soul (spirit), the heart, the ability to rationalize, and thus the agency to live a good life. Disenfranchised spirit theory is also in line with Benton-Banai's (1988) thoughts and Duran and Duran's (1995) "soul wound" as the culprit in Indigenous health issues.

Disenfranchised spirit theory and Skip's story begin to fill the gap in the literature of the positive effects of gaining Indian status registration through the 1985 and 2011 amendments to the *Indian Act*. Through Skip's bravery we learn that Indian status registration was for him a meaningful system of identity and thus heartfelt. It is in this way that fictional stories created by the Canadian government, mediated through power, have become endowed with meaning and spirit and have become lived entities in our communities. August 2011 marked Skip's tenth year of sobriety.

21 It must be noted here that with the advent of the second-generation cut-off rule in the 1985 amendment to the *Indian Act* more and more people may feel spiritually disenfranchised.

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