



Session 1: Getting to the Roots of Indigenous Citizenship, Membership and Identity

Information session designed for the Mohawks of Wahta

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‘Indians’ Are Not Real

The primary function of Indian status is as a boundary marker – a clear indicator of who is Indian and who is not, and it is only by retaining this power to include some and exclude others that Indian status has any meaning.

Anishinaabe, Bonita Lawrence

Who Are You?

- How do you identify yourself?
- What is the most important part of your identity?
- Is it your sex, your ethnicity, your sexual orientation, your religious affiliation, your age, your political beliefs?
- Is there one part of your identity that stands out from the rest?
- Does your identity change depending on who you are with, what you're involved in, where you are in your life?

Overview

- Preconceptions/Misconceptions
- The Basics – Specific Terminology
- Traditional ways of defining identity
- Traditional practices that speak to identity
- The *Indian Question*
- Constructed identities
- The Indian Act In The Real World
- Indigeneity

Overview Cont...

- Identity is a socially and historically constructed concept. We learn about our own identity and the identity of others through interactions with family, peers, organizations, institutions, media and other connections we make in our everyday life.
- Key facets of identity—like gender, social class, age, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity—play significant roles in determining how we understand and experience the world, as well as shaping the types of opportunities and challenges we face.
- Social and cultural identity is intimately linked to issues of power, value systems, and ideology.

Conceptualizing Identity

- We think about identity in singular terms (I am female)
- Also in multiple parts (I am a Mohawk woman from Kahnawake)
- We frame our identity in a broader social historical context and in relation to other groups
- Part of understanding identity means understanding how we fit in (or don't) with other groups of people


Conceptualizing Identity Cont...

- When we think about identity, we focus on external markers (what we can see)
- How we were born
- Our identities are also composed of ideas, ideologies, ways of seeing the world
- Identities are socially constructed, way we are born is only part of identity

- Where do these values/ideologies come from?
- Learned, internalized over lifetime from family, peers, role models, government, media
- They come out of places of power, we internalize them, take them for granted as defining who we are
- Seem natural, “the way things should be”
- They shape the way we see things, understand people, places, practices, institutions
- **Identities are not neutral**

Terminology

- Indian – Constructed Identity for distribution of resources since contact
- Aboriginal – Since 1982
- First Nations – Status, reserve community
- Status, Non-Status
- Indigenous – International context
- Mohawk, Kanienkehaka

- 
- One term been used to define another
 - Terms used in different ways by different people, different circumstances, different useage
 - Terms are not stable

Traditional Ways of Defining Identity

- Language
- Culture
- Territory
- Responsibilities
- Relationships

2 Foundational Narratives



Skywoman Story

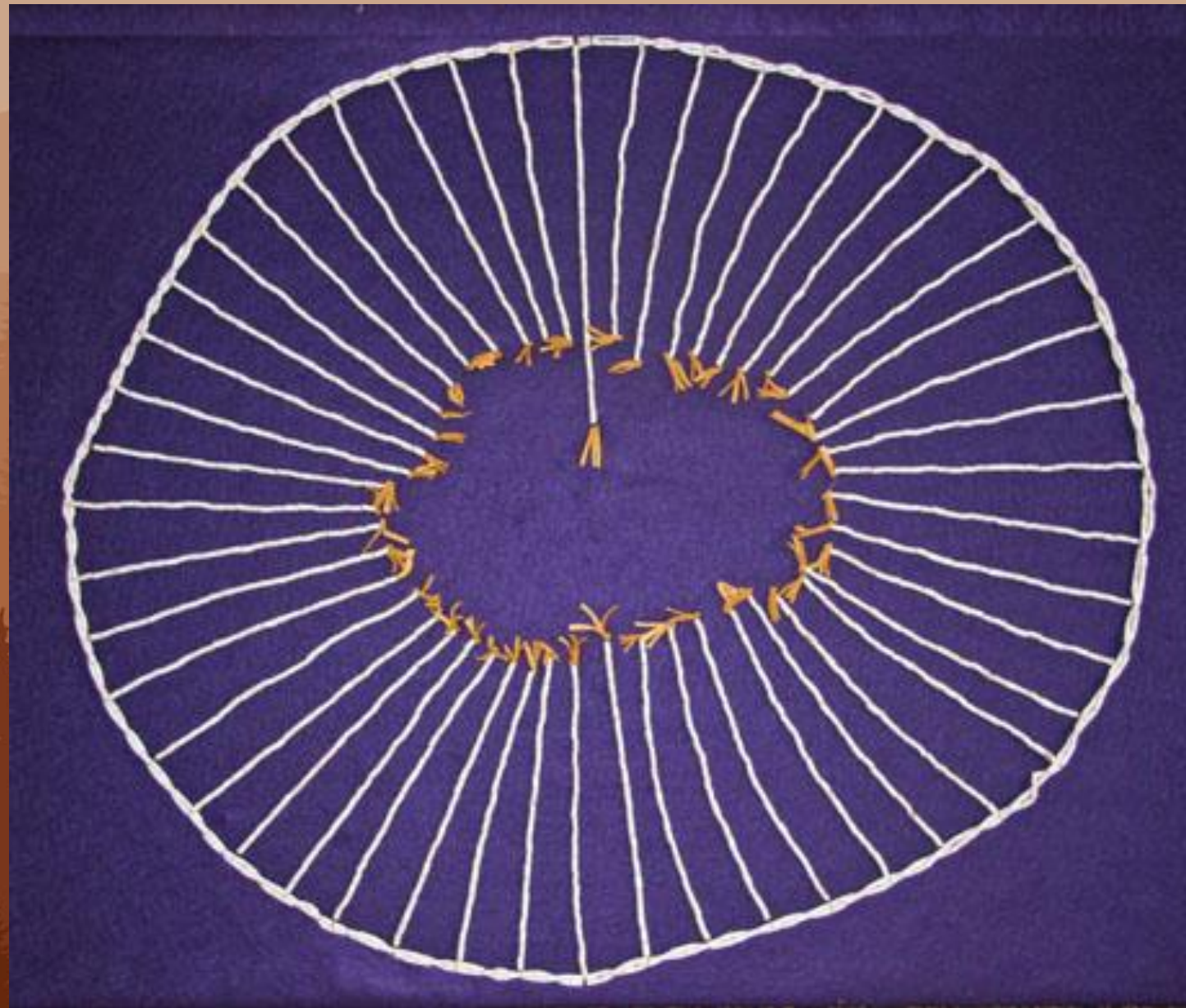
Peacemaker's Journey



Foundations

- Creation Stories - Skywoman's story
 - We are from somewhere
 - A sense of rootedness
- Peacemaker's Journey – Carries core ideas in Sky Woman Story

Circle Wampum



Citizenship/Membership

- Women responsible for determining citizenship
 - ‘mother culture’
 - Organic/humane vs. governed/bureaucratic
- Adoption: Captives ritually and factually nationalized
- Full members of their adoptive social communities
- Indigenous nations survived almost only because of traditional mother-centered thinking

The Thinking

- Inclusivity
- Survival
- Color-blind
- Flexible
- 7 Generations Principle
- Two Row Wampum

The Potential

- If Wahta was to recreate itself based on the idea of strengthening relationships and personal responsibility, what would it look like?
- What would the community social, political, spiritual constructs look like?

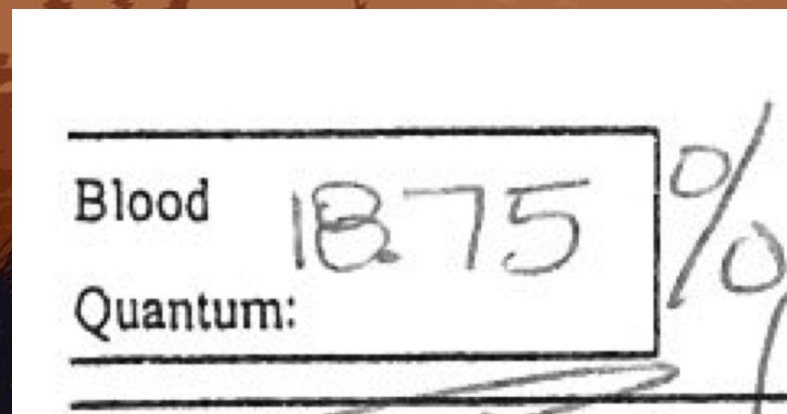
The Indian Question

“I want to get rid of the Indian problem. I do not think as a matter of fact, that the country ought to continuously protect a class of people who are able to stand alone... Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department...”

Duncan Campbell Scott, First Superintendent of Indian Affairs

Imposed Identity Constructs

- Rational patterns imposed on Indigenous peoples
- Scientific analysis, categorization
- Indigenous cultures not seen as rational
- Desire to assimilate
- Desire for access to lands and resources



Indian Act Impacts On Thinking

- 1763 - Royal Proclamation – paternalistic protection
- 1857 - Act to Encourage the Gradual Civilization of the Indian Tribes (Indian Advancement Act)
- Assimilation Based Developments
 - overthrow of treaty signatories
 - Extinguishment of land title
 - open up land to settlement
- 1867 - British North America Act – from protection to coercion
- 1876 - First Indian Act (after Confederation of Canada) exclusive responsibility of federal government – consolidates all laws relating to Indians
- 1880 - enfranchisement
- 1884 - Indian Advancement Act
- 1889 -1911 lands and rights to lands diminished
- 1921 - forced enfranchisement of 'suitable' candidates
- 1925 - overthrow of chiefs, outlawed potlatch, sundance, Great Law of Peace – other forms of traditional governance made illegal
 - Band Councils put in place



Continued...

- 1925-1951 Interwar period
- No control of resources, no control of own children
 - residential schools, foster care
 - No control of own resources
- Indian Agent had power of peace officer (police)
- on-reserve education to make Indian children obedient to authority
- enfranchisement
- Indians couldn't vote (as well as lunatics, alcoholics, and criminals)
- 1951 - complete overhaul of Indian Act
 - establishment of Indian Registry
- More clearly defined membership and policies defining Indian identity
- 1982 - The Constitution Act – Aboriginal rights given constitutional protection
- 1985 - Bill C-31
- 1995 – DIAND Custom Code guidelines

Further Terms

- Enfranchisement
- Emphasis on male lineage
- Bill C-31
- Double Mother Clause
- Band Membership List
- Federal Registry

Personal Impacts

- “The Indian Thing”
 - Part I 
 - Part II 
- “It’s not what I am. But I don’t really know what I am.” – Pat Moore
- “My grandfather Albert Hill was Mohawk Indian raised on Six Nations of the Grand River First Nations reserve southeast of Brantford, Ontario. Mildred Hill, my grandmother came from a poor Irish farming family near Montreal. Mildred was feisty and funny as well as racist against her husband and children. Her fear and secrets and longing for place still impacts our family profoundly.” Story Doula
- <https://storydoula.wordpress.com/2010/02/06/the-indian-thing/>

National Blood Quantum Formula

Determines Status Not Membership

Indian Formula

- $6(1) + 6(1) = 6(1)$
- $6(1) + 6(2) = 6(1)$
- $6(2) + 6(2) = 6(1)$

Second Generation

Cut-off

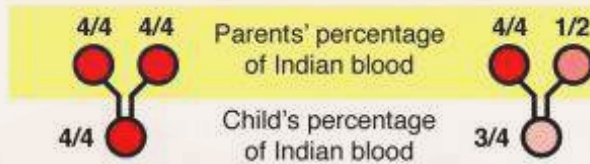
- $6(1) + \text{Non} = 6(2)$
- $6(2) + \text{Non} = \text{Non}$
- $\text{Non} + \text{Non} = \text{Non}$

The Conundrum of Blood Quantum

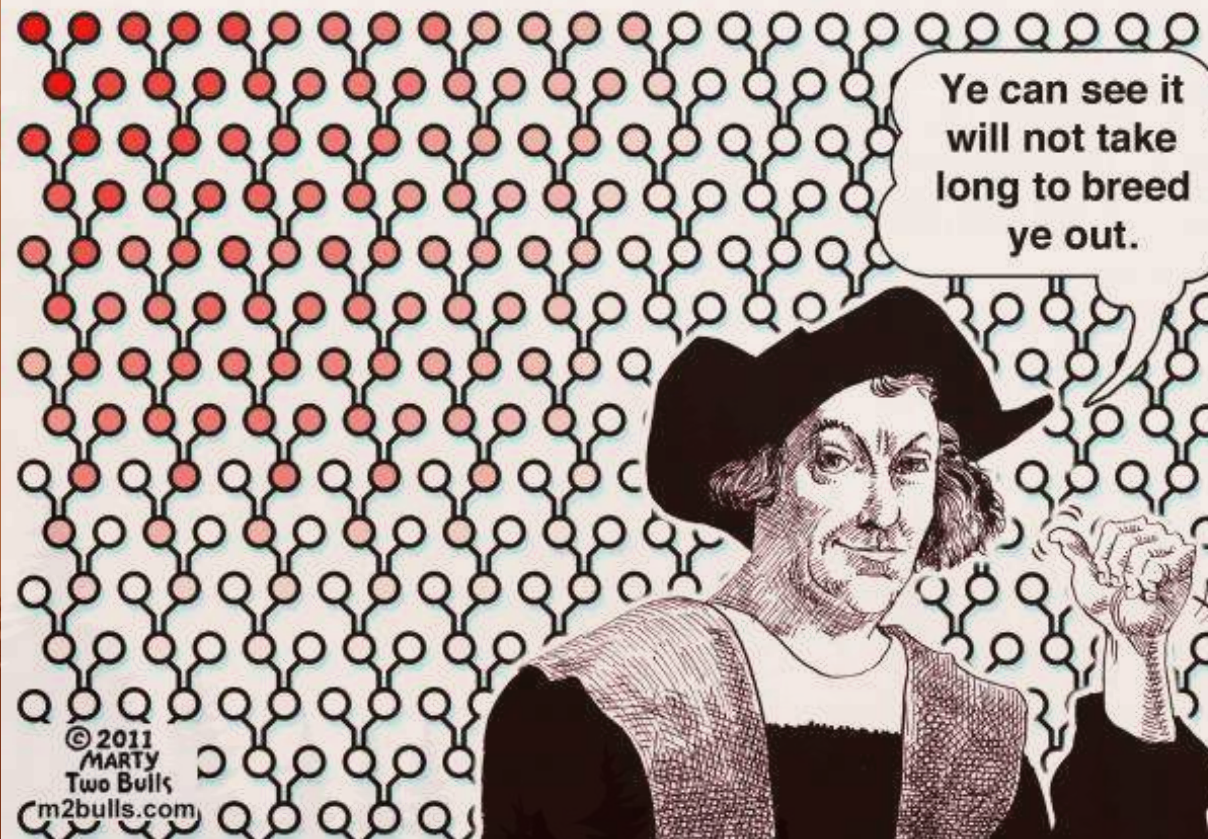
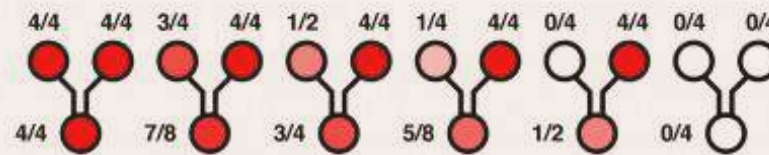
The formula is quite simple:

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} \text{Mother's} & & \text{Father's} & & \text{Total} & & \text{Total} & & \text{Child's} \\ \text{blood} & + & \text{blood} & = & \text{blood} & \div & \text{divided} & = & \text{blood} \\ \text{degree} & & \text{degree} & & \text{degree} & & \text{by half} & & \text{degree} \end{array}$$

If both parents are full-blood Indians, then the child from that union will be full-blood.



If one parent is full-blood and the other is half, then the child from that union will be three-fourths Indian.



Identity Markers

Family Tree Search

Six Nations Membership

PO Box 62 - 67 Bicentennial Trail
OHSWEKEN, ON
N0A 1M0

Applicant
Iowennakon
Garnette June
Band # BQM 12291 f

Father
Band # f

Paternal Grandfather
Band # f

Paternal Grandmother
(nee)
Band # f

Has any family member received BQ letter recently?
Name: _____

Mother
Michael George Lence
(nee)
Band # f

Maternal Grandfather
George
Died: Apr. 15, 1995
Band # BQM 94 f

Maternal Grandmother
Chiquita June
(nee)
Band # BQM 94 f NON INDIAN

Great Grandparents

George
Band # BQM f

Maggie
(nee B. NOV. 21, 1896)
Band # BQM 65 f

NON INDIAN
Band # f

NON INDIAN
(nee)
Band # f

Charles BQM 1

Sarah BQM 1

NON INDIAN

NON INDIAN

NON INDIAN

NON INDIAN

Blood Quantum: 1875 %

Confirmation: *[Signature]* Date: Aug. 14, 2012

* NON INDIAN GAINED STATUS THRU MARRIAGE *

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What did it change?

- Relationship to land – key to identity
- Relationship between men and women – sexualized identity, discrepancies
- Traditions and culture – key to social structures
- Language – key to describing identity, relationships
- Social, family structures – affected by sexism in the Act
- Parenting abilities – key to identity

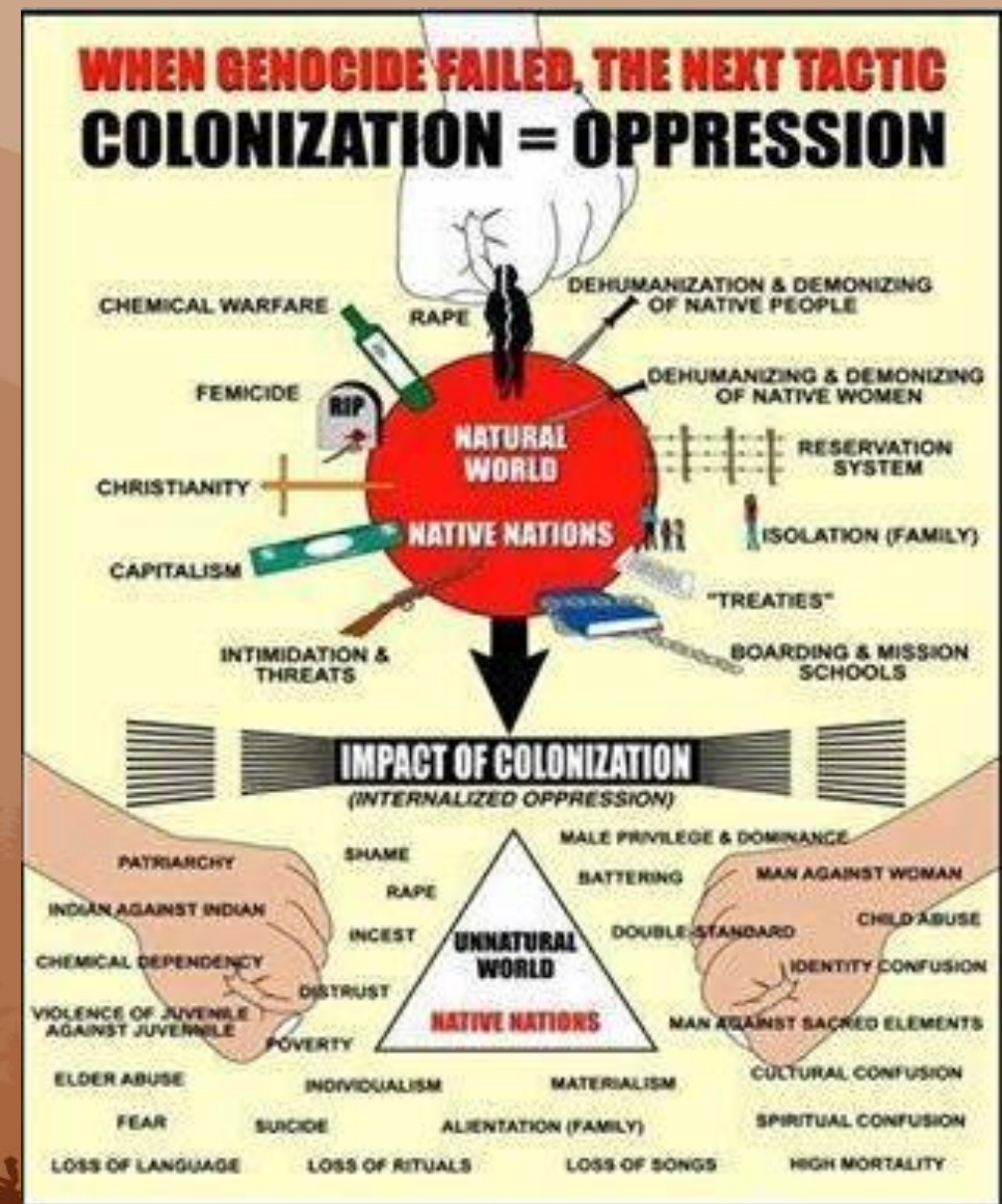
Indian Act In The Real World

- Bill C-31
- Matrimonial Real Interests Law
- Health issues
- Current Evictions Issue
- Lyne Gehl vs. Attorney General of Canada (unstated paternity)
- Lateral violence
- Reverse racism

Lateral Violence

Lateral Violence occurs within marginalized groups where members strike out at each other as a result of being oppressed. The oppressed become the oppressors of themselves and each other.

www.kweykway.ca/blog/what-is-lateral-violence



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Recovery

- Why does this issue of identity continue to be important to the Canadian government? To us?
- How is our identity to be recovered?
- What would the new social, political, spiritual constructs look like?
- How are communities preparing to deal with revisions on policies of blood quantum?

Discussion

1. What are the most important aspects of being a Wahta Mohawk from you or your family's perspective?
2. How can we make a stronger and more cohesive community with regards to identity and belonging?



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Nia:wen kowa

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