

# **THE REBUILDING OF A NATION: A GRASSROOTS ANALYSIS OF THE ABORIGINAL NATION-BUILDING PROCESS IN CANADA**

**Lynn Gehl**

600 Little Street #5

Peterborough, Ontario

Canada, K9J 4C3

E-mail: [lynngehl@trentu.ca](mailto:lynngehl@trentu.ca)

## **Abstract / Résumé**

This paper provides a contemporary first person analysis of the Aboriginal nation-building process in Canada. The author integrates theory with her experience as a subject of exclusion in this same process and argues that this exclusion has been informed through past historical injustices against Aboriginal women. The author works through issues of how identity becomes essentialized, therefore, a barrier for many non-status Aboriginals, and she addresses the dilemma of how the Algonquin themselves are embracing essentialized identity for strategic purposes. The paper advocates a unique perspective on how the future Algonquin nation might develop a more inclusive unity.

L'auteure propose une analyse personnelle du processus d'édification des nations autochtones au Canada. Elle intègre la théorie dans son expérience de sujet d'exclusion dans le même processus et elle met de l'avant l'argument selon lequel l'exclusion a été fondée sur les injustices historiques à l'égard des femmes autochtones. L'auteure examine la question de «l'essentialisation» de l'identité, qui est devenue un obstacle pour de nombreux Autochtones non inscrits, et elle se heurte au dilemme posé par l'adoption par les Algonquins d'une définition essentialisée de l'identité à des fins stratégiques. L'auteure met de l'avant une perspective unique sur le développement d'une notion d'identité inclusive au sein de la future nation algonquine.

## Introduction

Aboriginal<sup>1</sup> historian and scholar Howard Adams challenges Aboriginal people to mobilize their voices and to use their productions of literature as tools of empowerment. He argues that, "our productions must reveal colonization, oppression, racism and class, and at the same time, work toward decolonization, freedom and liberation" (1999: 115). I will add that we must also reveal issues of sexist oppression. In this paper, I will demonstrate that a particular Aboriginal community here in Canada, through no fault of their own, is entrenched with racist and sexist ideology due to imposed European standards and that these same ideologies are informing the nation-building<sup>2</sup> process. I suggest that the exclusion of once enfranchised Aboriginal women and their descendants at all levels of the self-determination process is historically rooted. Today, many Aboriginal people have been so indoctrinated with colonialism that at times it is they who are preventing Aboriginal women and their descendants from participating at all levels of the self-determination process, thus perpetuating their continued subjugation.<sup>3</sup> Through this process, the sons and daughters of Aboriginal men and women who have never lost status have become, according to Adams, "the colonizer's policemen [and] are the cruelest oppressors of their own people" (42).

Raphael Lemkin (1973) describes genocide as having two phases: first, the destruction of the oppressed group's national pattern; second, the imposition of the oppressor's national pattern. Throughout this paper, I argue that the legacy of the past is informing the present. Through internalized oppression, the Algonquin themselves are, as Lemkin has described, implementing the second phase of cultural genocide, the imposition of the oppressor's national pattern.

In the following pages, I will first provide a historical account of the location of Aboriginal women in their societies prior to European contact. I will then discuss the right of Aboriginal women and their descendants to be included in all aspects of the nation-building process. Next, I provide a condensed version of Algonquin Chief negotiator Greg Sarazin's historical account of the journey that the Algonquin of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation (formerly known as the Algonquin of Golden Lake) have ventured on, in their ambitious attempt to be recognized as a sovereign nation here in what is now known as Ontario, Canada.

Although this narrative is evidently my own, a broader story is being told that many of the descendants of Aboriginal women who have been forced out of their communities and who now live in urban settings away from their traditional territories can relate to.<sup>4</sup> My first-person account will discuss issues associated with essentializing identity, the Algonquin

negotiators, the Algonquin nation's hiring practices, and will include an examination of my personal band membership request and the distribution of language kits. I then examine some of the barriers that exist for urban Aboriginal people in their attempt to maintain their cultural identity and in participating in the nation-building process. I end by re-writing a historical moment between the Big River People and Samuel de Champlain.

In summary, this paper is not so much about the nation-building process per se, as it is an examination of the nation-building process from my marginal location that has been informed by colonial processes of racist and sexist legislation. Unfortunately, in providing this analysis I realize that I may ruffle more than a few feathers<sup>5</sup> in the Aboriginal community as others before me have. Sharon McIvor, Patricia Monture-Angus, and more recently, Lina Sunseri have examined and critiqued the nation-building process here in Canada from both legal and cultural perspectives—a safer location. My analysis, and subsequently my critique, is a grassroots examination of the nation-building process. I can only hope that my critique will be viewed as constructive and that aspects of it will be reflected on and embraced in the Algonquin's attempt to build a just society.

Initially, I would like to qualify my location of "situated knowledge" (Collins 2000), a location, worthy of restating, that has been imposed on me by a White European Christian Patriarchal state through the use of racist and sexist legislation known as the *Indian Act*, previously entitled *An Act to Encourage the Gradual Civilization of Indians*.

### Situated Knowledge

I was raised, and continue to exist, on the margins of society and this informs my *truth*. Residing at this location has provided me with the skills of critical reflection. I am marginal in the sense that I am a non-status Aboriginal woman; I am also marginal due to a visual impairment. Like the great Algonquin Chief Tessouat, I am blind in one eye. In addition, like many Aboriginal people, I am a *product* of the culture of poverty and what I have recently come to refer to as inner-city apartheid hell. Unfortunately, this is a location that many Aboriginal people have found themselves situated in once their ancestors were removed from their traditional homelands and their culture slaughtered. Jonathan Spencer describes the *advantage* of my location well when he says, "the marginal figure is more likely to ponder on what is going on and why, precisely because [of] his or her partial detachment from the centre of things" (1989: 155).

In addition, as an Algonquin, I am both an outsider and an insider, a

location recognized by others as a place of "in-between" (Bhabha 1994). My outsider status results from my being a non-status Aboriginal person as my name has been "correctly omitted from the Indian Register" as defined by the *Indian Act* (Gehl 2000: 68). Along with myself, many others have fallen victim to the essentializing manner by which Indian Affairs determines who is and, more appropriately, who is not an Indian. This I feel, and unfortunately many *legal Indians* would argue as well, makes me an outsider.<sup>6</sup> Through this process of essentializing cultural identity, the *Indian Act* has inscribed my very identity and my relationship with other Aboriginal people, specifically and critically with the Algonquin of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation.

For political purposes the Algonquin of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation are employing strategic essentialism. Algonquin Law Enrolment via 1/8<sup>th</sup> blood-quantum determines who is entitled to participate in the process of self-determination negotiations. This essentializing practice provides me with an insider status, yet because of colonial processes I remain limited in my capacity in terms of involvement. These limits stem from my ancestors having been forced to leave the reservation and traditional territory because they were women who married out.

In summary, I am an outsider/insider of the Algonquin nation. Although I am not a band member of the Algonquin of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation, I am a member of Algonquin Enrolment Law where status is not required. The *Indian Act* defines me an outsider while Algonquin Law via blood-quantum defines me an insider.

## Historical Glimpse

Adams asserts, "when Europeans conquered the Indigenous nations of North America, they destroyed the existing economic and political institutions, and redesigned the Native society according to their own values" (110). In addition, elsewhere it is stated that Aboriginal people in Canada were not "accorded the rights and privileges of Canadian citizenship" until it was determined that they became "civilized" according to European ideology (cited in Stevenson 1999: 69). One can directly trace this ideological and cultural domination—an attempt to civilize the savages—to 19<sup>th</sup> century evolutionism. At that time it was believed that the "conquest of an inferior society by a superior one was the result of the action of natural law, and hence not only moral but imperative" (McGee and Warms 1996: 8). Thus, ethnocentric European ideology, embodied in the notion of civilization, drove the Europeans to believe that they were doing the savages a favour when legislating the civilization mission.

Long and Dickason (1996) add that in the years since the Indians

were *discovered* by Columbus, the traditional roles of women have changed dramatically. Women, according to European values, were psychologically unstable, morally questionable, had no significance beyond motherhood and domestic duties and were merely sexual vessels for man's release. This "cult of true womanhood," according to Stevenson, was imposed on Aboriginal women here in the new world (55). Culturally, Aboriginal men did not share this view of women; women were valued and respected. Contrary to European women, Aboriginal women were independent, hard working, strong, and in control of their own bodies and sexuality. In addition, women made decisions regarding property, leadership, and war (Stevenson).

In 1850, "Canada" introduced a series of legislations, known today as the *Indian Act*, which governed all aspects of Aboriginal life. Through the enfranchisement section of the *Indian Act*, Aboriginal people became Canadian citizens. Indians were granted Canadian citizenship once they proved themselves to be civilized according to European standards. Once enfranchised into White society they were disenfranchised from their communities (Stevenson). Through the process of enfranchising Indians, the oppressor was resolving the *Indian problem*. Duncan Campbell Scott, the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs in 1920, was recorded as saying, "our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic" (cited in Jamieson 1978: 50).

Most detrimental was the gendered form of cultural genocide, imposed in the 1869 legislation, where Aboriginal women would lose Indian status upon marriage to a non-Indian man, thereby becoming enfranchised<sup>7</sup> into White society. It has been estimated that of the 16,980 enfranchised Indians 12,305 were women who married out (cited in Long and Dickason). This clearly constitutes the majority.

Interestingly, enfranchisement was intended as a goal for Indians to achieve yet it was also a form of punishment (Long and Dickason). It was a reward in the sense that if an Indian obtained a university degree he/she was enfranchised automatically. It was used as a form of punishment in that when an Indian was caught with alcohol he/she was enfranchised.

Further, Long and Dickason state that an Indian could simply become enfranchised if they raised the ire of the Indian agent (99). It was not only the Indian agent that was of concern, as my great-grandmother Annie discovered. Annie was not enfranchised into White society until she angered the Chief who unfortunately in turn directed the Indian agent to enfranchise her and her children. Consequently, her family was escorted off the reservation. On January 30, 1945, she was officially informed

by Indian agent H.P. Ruddy that upon her marriage to a "white man" she became a "white woman" (see Appendix A). Her husband, Joseph, was in actuality Algonquin through his mother, Angeline, a black Indian from the Lake of Two Mountains; his father, Joseph Sr., was French. Therefore, Joseph too was deemed White and this in turn made my great-grandmother White when they were married.

In summary, the series of legislations, eventually entitled the *Indian Act*, created inequality between men and women and reduced the location of Aboriginal women in their communities. This was a severe blow to the autonomy of Aboriginal women who were now vulnerable not only to Indian agents, but also to their band councils and their male family members who became so indoctrinated by the sexist regulations that they willingly enforced them. As a result, many women were forced off reservations into larger urban centres far from their extended families. An example of this indoctrination is the forced removal of my great-grandmother and her children when she angered the Chief. This practice of forced removal and oppression of Aboriginal women has huge implications today in the self-determination process here in Canada. The next section of this paper specifically addresses the legal rights of these women and their descendants.

## **Self-Determination is Our Right**

Even if the suppression of women's rights was so oppressive it led to their banishment from Aboriginal communities, this, in itself, did not lead to extinguishment of their rights. (McIvor 1999: 169)

Despite the legal maneuvering by the state to exclude women from their communities, it has been argued by McIvor, "collective and individual rights are inherent, protected in, but not created by, the Canadian *Constitution*. They are rights that have existed since people existed, and the right to self-government is one of them" (167). McIvor further states that these rights are both foundational and fundamental and can never be taken away from individuals or collectivities in society; this includes the imposition of the *Indian Act*. She continues,

To deny Aboriginal women their participatory rights because Canadian laws expelled women from the communities and denied them their traditional rights would run completely contrary to the willingness of all parties to recognize the inherent right to self-government. It would recognize only the patriarchal interpretation of the inherent right while blatantly denying the traditional, political roles of women. (McIvor 1999: 168)

Mclvor further contends that Canada, via the *Indian Act*, has created a body of Indians associated with a particular land base. Mclvor states these individuals represent "legal fictions" and that the land provided does not represent "Indian lands" (179). Mclvor employs the concept "legal fictions" because these individuals do not represent all Aboriginal people. As the previous section of my paper argued, many descendants of Aboriginal women are not registered as status Indians<sup>8</sup> nor are they residing on reservations.

Unfortunately, the implications of this fiction have become systemic in Aboriginal communities. Focusing on reservations in self-determination efforts places status Indians at an advantage, as they are the "legal fictions" created by Parliament. Furthermore, negotiation headquarters are focused on reservations and subsequently it is those who reside there who hold the employment positions and who become the hiring body for the process itself. This leaves many Aboriginal women, who were once enfranchised for marrying out as well as their descendants, through no fault of their own, without direct involvement because they are now living in urban centres that are often outside the traditional territory. Despite this state created fiction, Mclvor argues that Aboriginal women must be involved at *all* levels of the nation-building process and this includes national, provincial, and local (regional) levels.

In summary, it would be a mistake for the reservation system and status Indians to monopolize and control self-determination efforts, as this would exclude many Aboriginal people who have been discriminated against due to colonial processes. Aboriginal women and their descendants have rights that are affirmed and protected in the *Canadian Constitution*.

### **Algonquin Golden Lake First Nation History<sup>9</sup>**

Many are not aware that here in Canada it is the Algonquin who house the "Queen's representatives." Algonquin traditional territory consists of 8.5 million acres (see Appendix B) of the Ottawa River watershed between Mattawa and Hawkesbury Ontario, which includes most of Algonquin Park as well as the land that Parliament Hill resides on (AGLFN 1993).

Algonquin Chief negotiator Sarazin argues that the Algonquin were never newcomers to this territory. The Algonquin, Sarazin explains, have lived in the Ottawa River Valley "as long as the French have lived in France or the English have lived in England." Sarazin maintains that the Algonquin of the Ottawa Valley controlled who moved up and down the Ottawa River well "beyond the limits of what is now called history" (1989: 169). Under the great one-eyed Chief Tessouat, the Algonquin demanded

tribute from all who passed. This included Samuel de Champlain. The first recorded contact between the Algonquin and the Europeans was in 1613 (AGLFN 1993).

After the British took over New France, the Royal Proclamation of 1763 was established to *protect* Aboriginal rights. Nine years after the Proclamation, the Algonquin made their first formal assertion of Aboriginal title. This Algonquin claim went unrecognized. Between 1772 and 1983, the Algonquin made 26 more petitions, speeches, and appeals asserting their rights to their homeland (AGLFN 1993).

In 1857, five Algonquin families petitioned for 200 acres of land each, as this was the size of the land grants that White settlers were receiving. Pathetically, six years later the Indian Department used Indian funds to buy Algonquin land and paid \$156.10 for 1,560 acres for the reservation at Golden Lake. In 1880, there were 83 Indians, seven log houses, sixteen wigwams<sup>10</sup> and thirteen barns and stables on the reservation (Sarazin).

Many Algonquin for several reasons chose not to reside on the reservation and in 1876 when the *Indian Act* was instituted many of these non-reserve Algonquin were therefore not recognized as Indians as defined by the *Indian Act* (Sarazin). Moreover, historically cultural factors determined who was a member of the community. For example, my *kokomis* (grandmother in Algonquin), via the oral tradition, has told me that her grandmother, Angeline, and many other women at Golden Lake raised the children of French girls, as their parents had disowned them for having children out of marriage. She frequently said that these girls would walk down the railway that cut through the reservation carrying their babies to give away to the Indians. Thus, many White children were adopted into the Algonquin community as cultural factors, not biology or blood, determined who was a member of the Algonquin community.

In 1974, an attempt to remove this very same railway, under Chief Dan Tennisco, led to the discovery of the original 1857 Algonquin petition for land, and subsequently the realization that there had never been a treaty signed by the Algonquin (Sarazin). In 1983, the Algonquin once again delivered a petition to the Governor General.

In an attempt to battle the mighty bureaucratic structures, the Algonquin employed media power, which proved to be somewhat effective. Embracing their cultural knowledge of the East as the direction of new beginnings, on September 2, 1988, the Algonquin set up a road-block just outside the Eastern gate of Algonquin Park. On October 17, 1988, the provincial and federal governments sent representatives to Golden Lake to discuss the land claim (Sarazin). On June 15, 1991, Ontario committed to negotiating a settlement and land claim with the Algonquin

and on December 7, 1992, the government of Canada announced they would join the negotiations (AGLFN 1993).

In summary, in this section I discussed the reality that many Algonquin were never registered with the Department of Indian Affairs. I also provided a first person narrative of how cultural values determined community membership, not a narrow European concept of vertical genetic transfer. This of course has implications in the land claim, as many people are not recognized by the state as Algonquin.

The Algonquin have made several attempts to resolve the outstanding land claim since their first petition of 1772, beginning just a few years after the Royal Proclamation that was apparently instituted to protect their rights. It would be an understatement to say the Algonquin wait patiently for the Queen's representatives to pay their rent.

## **My First Person Account: An Outsider's/Insider's Perspective**

### **Essentializing Identity**

To impose an essentialized identity is to reduce a person's self-concept to a narrow and rigid essence of who he or she truly is. This process is oppressive in that it limits self-expression. Stuart Hall defines an essentialized subject as someone whose social, cultural, political, religious, and ideological characteristics are thought to belong to his or her race and are determined by his or her genes (cited in Yon 1999). Having said this, the *Indian Act* is a form of legal essentialism in that legislation determines *Indianness*, whereas Algonquin Enrolment Law is a form of biological essentialism in that it employs blood to determine *Algonquinness*.

Further, Algonquin Law is a process of strategic political essentialism in that the Algonquin themselves are embracing it for the purpose of nation-building. Through this process they are seeking to include Algonquin who are not defined as Indians under the *Indian Act*. A list of *true* Algonquin names has been compiled in what is referred to as "Schedule A" (the first page can be seen in Appendix C). This list, and an application process, is employed to determine if individuals are entitled to Algonquin Law Enrolment.

A minimum of 1/8<sup>th</sup> Algonquin blood-quantum is required which must be proven through genealogical records (birth, marriage, death and census records). For the purpose of enrolment, the names on Schedule A, and any person who on July 15, 1897 was a direct descendant of a person whose name appears in Schedule A, are considered to be 100% Algonquin.

I find this practice of using Schedule A to determine who is an Algonquin very disconcerting because it is derived from 19<sup>th</sup> century census records and petitions which are inherently patriarchal in that they are based on European standards. For example, it was a common practice for women to be listed as "wife" as they were considered mere chattel of their husbands. Thus, in many instances, no names were provided for these mothers of the present Algonquin nation (see Appendix D). Having said this, a simple glance at Schedule A quickly demonstrates that a majority of the names inscribed are indeed male. In addition, many non-status people know that they are Algonquin through the oral tradition. Therefore, to impose a framework that determines one's identity, which is steeped in European values, serves to perpetuate the colonial process and is contrary to decolonization.

Having the genealogical and archival skills to *create legal Indians*, yet limited in my capacity due to being partially sighted, I have been approached by many non-status/non-Algonquin Law members in their need and desire to be registered under the *Indian Act* or under Algonquin Enrolment Law. I have assisted some in their quest and these same members of the community have informed me that there are individuals who charge an excessive sum for genealogical research for the purpose of fulfilling these two essentializing practices of identity. This, of course, may not be a requirement that many status Indians are faced with as their genealogical records are held with Indian Affairs and with the Algonquin of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation band office.

In summary, both the *Indian Act* and Algonquin Enrolment Law are a hindrance to Algonquin unity. Both reduce cultural identity to biology and both have an inherent gender bias. Algonquin Enrolment Law, although more inclusive, is problematic because it too provides barriers and therefore excludes. The next subsection deals directly with the Algonquin government structure that has been implemented to direct and guide the self-determination process.

### **Algonquin Negotiators**

For the purpose of negotiations, the Algonquin traditional territory has been divided into regional communities headed by representatives. Members of Algonquin Enrolment Law democratically elect these representatives. This body of regional representatives, eight in total, makes up a body called the Algonquin Nation Negotiations Directive (ANND). ANND in turn informs the Algonquin negotiators who reside at the table with the government negotiators (see Appendix E).

The purpose of these regions is to provide an arena for all Algonquin to become involved in the nation-building process. Ultimately, a final

and conclusive treaty is desired and it is hoped that this process will ensure finality. An Algonquin negotiator has assured me that the eight regional representatives are diversified in terms of both gender and in terms of status and non-status. Unfortunately, this does not resolve the reality that both members of the Algonquin negotiating team are status on-reserve men and therefore not representative of the larger Algonquin body. Nor have they been democratically elected. Interestingly, both the provincial and federal negotiators have changed several times throughout the process whereas the Algonquin representatives have continually retained their positions.

Due to the past patrilineal criteria of the *Indian Act*, and the forced removal of women from the reservation, the positions that the Algonquin negotiators hold and have maintained since 1992 have been informed by past discriminatory practices. I advocate that members of the larger Algonquin community should democratically elect these Algonquin negotiators. Equal representation at all levels of the process is required, as a status on-reserve man would have more difficulty understanding the full range of concerns and issues from the perspective of non-status urban Algonquin.

In summary, the colonization process has informed the present Algonquin nation negotiations structure. Many people are unaware of how entrenched these divisions of status vs. non-status, on reserve vs. off reserve, and man vs. woman are due to the destruction of the oppressed's national pattern and the imposition of the oppressor's national pattern. This leads to the purpose of the next two subsections of this paper.

### **The Algonquin Nation's Hiring Practices**

The Algonquin of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation at one point hired a communications officer. This individual produced a monthly newspaper, the *Tanakiwin*, on behalf of the Office of Algonquin Negotiations. The controversy is that this individual, although a status Indian, was not a member of the Algonquin community. I have found myself many times since this incident questioning the hiring practices of the Algonquin Negotiation Department: to whom are they accountable? More specifically, I question if the only criterion for employment is registration with Indian Affairs, regardless of which nation the individual comes from?

This incident of Algonquin hiring practices is an example of *Indian Act* indoctrination. Registration as an Indian was given priority for employment within the negotiations department over membership in the larger Algonquin community. I find it difficult to believe that a qualified individual from the larger community was not available to fill this position.

### Band Membership and Language Kits

Last summer (2000) I had two other experiences that have left doubt in my mind regarding the Algonquin of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation's ability to resolve the differences, imposed through colonialism, between status and non-status Algonquin. First, was the manner in which my request for band membership was denied.

In 1985 when the *Indian Act* was amended, the Government of Canada provided for bands to opt to govern their own membership. The Algonquin of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation now manage their own membership and on November 19, 1996, on the advice of legal counsel I applied for band membership. I expected to be denied, as I am aware that funds provided to bands are based on the number of registered Indians. The impetus for my membership request was that if in the event I was asked by a judge, "Have you ever applied for band membership?" I wanted to answer, "Yes." I did not want a failure to request band membership to undermine my ongoing *Charter* Challenge concerning the Canadian state's denial of my cultural identity, via the continued discrimination in the *Indian Act* (Gehl).

Despite my preparedness for denial of band membership, to say that the wording of the reply that I received horrified me would be an understatement. The response, that painstakingly took *three and one half years* to obtain, read as follows:

I have reviewed your request in accordance with the Membership Code. You do not meet the requirements set out in Section 3.1 of the Code which states: "Any person who is a direct descendent of a member of the Algonquins of Golden Lake and is registered or entitled to be registered as an Indian in accordance with the provisions of the Indian Act." Therefore, I cannot accept you as a member of our Community.

Even though I was prepared for a "No" response, the rejection in the last sentence took me off guard. My thoughts immediately went out to my *kokomis* and her mother when the RCMP *escorted* them off of the reservation. I felt, I am certain, how they must have felt then. This time though it was the Algonquin of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation themselves, as opposed to an Indian agent, doing the dirty work of getting rid of the *Indian problem*. This clearly represents phase two of Lemkin's definition of cultural genocide—the imposition of the national pattern of the oppressor's values. One would think that this practice is contrary to the Algonquin's desire to build a new nation. In view of this goal, one would think that a membership clerk would carefully choose the words of refusal such as:

As much as the Algonquin of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation

would like to have you as a member of our community, resources dictated by the *Indian Act* force us to deny your application for band membership. Despite this, we look forward to the day when our community, through the self-determination and nation-building process, includes all Algonquin like you.

Unfortunately, for myself and this membership clerk who represents the Algonquin of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation, the exclusion of non-status people from band membership does not only involve a "No, sorry...." but an outright exclusion from the community. The *Indian Act* is entrenched and institutionalized not only in my rejection but also in the membership clerk's choice of language in his/her rejection of me.

The second event, a decision that was made by the Algonquin of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation regarding language kit distribution, occurred during a national assembly. The theme of this celebration was Honouring the Spirit of Tessouat—Uniting All Algonquins. The larger Algonquin communities were invited to attend. This included regional representatives and their communities here in Ontario as well as members of the Algonquin nations located in Quebec. It was a one-day event that included various speeches and workshops. Needless to say, I was more than eager to add my voice to the workshop on nation-building. Despite my initial enthusiasm, I soon realized that my concern over the ability of the band to overcome its bias, engendered by the *Indian Act*, was appropriately felt.

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis concerns the impact of language on human behaviour. Sapir and Whorf have concluded, "language has the power to shape the way people see the world" (Schultz and Lavenda 1998: 84). It seems that the Algonquin of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation have caught on to the idea of language as a *force carrier* of culture as they have decided to strategically revitalize their quickly vanishing language. For this reason language kits were distributed during the national assembly. One must commend them for such an ambitious project; this I do. However, I do have a critique.

In the afternoon, while I attended a workshop titled Unity, which was facilitated by Chief Lisa Eshkakogan herself, I raised the issue of language kit distribution, specifically why they were provided at no charge to status members, yet a charge was applicable to non-status members. If true unity is sought, I asked, why are non-status individuals charged a fee whereas status individuals are not? My question was answered in terms of funding, specifically, who provided the funds—Indian Affairs. Based on this, the band decided to provide these kits to all status members yet sell them to non-status members.

I felt it would have been more appropriate and more in line with solidarity—the theme of the national assembly—if the language kits had been distributed on a first come first serve basis or possibly provided to the Algonquin who were registered for the national assembly. Distribution in this manner would also have ensured that the more motivated Algonquin would have received a kit and this of course would facilitate the rebirth of the Algonquin language. This would have been more suitable as opposed to allowing the *Indian Act* to be the determining factor in who would and who would not be charged for the language kits. Here again the oppressed have taken it upon themselves to impose the oppressor's values. Needless to say as an act of resistance, I chose not to purchase a language kit that day.

The next section of this paper addresses barriers that urban Aboriginal people have to contend with in their attempt to proactively and constructively participate in their nation's quest for sovereignty.

### **The Urban Aboriginal<sup>11</sup>**

In the context of the sustained assault on aboriginal cultures in cities and the poverty of much of the urban population, there is a need for substantial new institutional support to assist Aboriginal people in maintaining and enhancing their cultural identity in urban areas. (Long and Dickason 1996: 322)

It has been determined through the *1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey* that 49.5 percent of self-identified Aboriginal people in Canada live in urban areas (cited in Long and Dickason). Maintaining one's culture in an urban setting has its own associated difficulties. Once in urban areas, the assimilation project is a formidable force. Traditions, ceremonies, and language are not easily accessible. One could walk to the community church and a priest more easily than one could access a sweat lodge or an Elder. For successive generations, this is what many of the descendants of the larger Algonquin nation have had to endure. Despite this, the children of these women who were involuntarily enfranchised as White have a right to have their concerns addressed and their voices heard.

Although it is outside of the traditional territory, Toronto is the largest urban centre in Ontario and is likely to hold many dispossessed Algonquin. Many of these Algonquin are poor, disabled, and are dealing with loss of identity and issues of internalized oppression which has created problems with low-self esteem, shame, alcoholism, and drug addiction. Yet, there are few proactive processes to include or to educate these Toronto Algonquin in the nation-building process. Furthermore,

Algonquin living in Toronto, who are informed enough to seek participation in the land claim process, are forced to travel five hours one-way to meet with their regional representative.

Arjun Appadurai introduces a new concept "ethnoscape" to express the idea that group identity and culture around the world in this postmodern era are no longer "tightly territorialized" or "spatially bounded" (1991: 191). Appadurai argues that localizing strategies can no longer capture the complexities of societies that exist today. This changing concept of group identity must be applied to the future Algonquin nation; through colonization, cultural identity is no longer tied to our traditional territory. To link Algonquin involvement in the nation-building process to a particular geographic location, our traditional territory, is unreasonable during these postmodern times.

In addition, and similar to McIvor, Monture-Angus argues "any effort to move toward self-determination which focuses on the reserve as the sole basis for any form of jurisdiction will be unsatisfactory to urban and Métis groups." Monture-Angus maintains that the reservation system is a non-Aboriginal creation and "any plan or model that accepts without question the reserve as a basis for government powers entrenches colonialism" (1999: 30). She further asserts,

It is not essential to define self-determination within the confines of territorial limits. There are a number of exceptions to the territorial integrity of a nation state which are already recognized in [Canadian] domestic law. Among others, the exceptions include income tax provisions, criminal law and admiralty law. (38-39)

In summary, both Appadurai and Monture-Angus, and for that matter McIvor, provide support to my argument for the need of the future Algonquin nation to rethink their strategy of nation-building to one that proactively includes the Algonquin who live in urban settings outside of their traditional territory. It is my contention that a responsible Algonquin government structure would take the necessary steps to educate, empower, and include all Algonquin, rural and urban, status and non-status. The Algonquin government structure now intact under ANND must consider establishing representation in Toronto; otherwise, it perpetuates the colonization and assimilation process.

## **An Algonquin Narrative**

During the Algonquin national assembly—Honouring the Spirit of Tessouat—Algonquin negotiator Kirby Whiteduck provided a historical account of the Algonquin in the Ottawa Valley and their initial contact with Champlain. Whiteduck's oral version of this meeting, in my opinion,

brilliantly gave birth to Algonquin ideology, which may be essential during these difficult times of nation-building.

Whiteduck proceeded to tell the narrative of our one-eyed Chief Tessouat and his jurisdiction over the Big River that has since been renamed the Ottawa River. When Tessouat encountered Champlain in 1613, he demanded the usual toll. After refusing, it seems that Champlain *lost* his astrolabe. Whiteduck's narrative continued stating that over two hundred and fifty years later, in 1867, Champlain's astrolabe was *discovered* in what was formerly a swamp in the Renfrew County area of Cobden, Ontario, 100 kilometers west of Ottawa.

Interestingly, Hall suggests narratives of nationhood composed of symbols, stories, and rituals provide a location that people can identify with. He argues they,

stand for, or *represent* the shared experiences, sorrows, and triumphs and disasters which give meaning to the nation. As members of such an 'imagined community', we see ourselves in our mind's eye sharing in this narrative. It lends significance and importance to our humdrum existence, connecting our everyday lives with a national destiny that pre-existed us and will outlive us. (1992: 293)

With this in mind, I advocate that Champlain's missing astrolabe be understood in Algonquin terms. Possibly the astrolabe was not lost but rather was *taken* in lieu of tribute for traveling the Big River. This understanding of the missing astrolabe could be deployed by the Algonquin as a narrative of their new nation, one that implies agency and resistance. Empowerment and motivation are major obstacles for the Algonquin people. The solution may be symbolic representation of Algonquin agency. From this location, we can begin to build our future.

## Summary and Conclusion

The Algonquin nation is struggling in its current liminal location, a location known anthropologically for its high affect and confusion. There is much uncertainty over whether the future Algonquin nation will consist of individuals of equality, or whether inequality will continue to divide us once we become an independent nation.

State control and manipulation of Aboriginal people through the denial of their cultural identity has been especially detrimental to Aboriginal women and their descendants. Through a series of efforts and legislations, the civilization mission has forced many from their traditional territories. The Algonquin are employing strategic essentialism in their current nation-building project. Unfortunately, Algonquin Enrolment Law presents once enfranchised women and their descen-

dants with barriers that those who have never lost status do not have to contend with. As a result, the *Indian Act* continues to divide the Algonquin nation.

Further, prior to the European invasion, cultural factors, as opposed to genetic factors determined community membership. In addition, where modernity contained identity to a particular landscape, dynamics of postmodernity challenge a fixed geographically based concept of identity. These understandings of identity have yet to be limited by the *Indian Act*, Algonquin Law, biology and geographic barriers. Despite the state's best efforts to rid itself of Indians, these Aboriginal people have rights that are affirmed and protected in the *Canadian Constitution*.

Through my outsider's/insider's perspective I have provided: a first-person account of the problems inherent in essentialized identity—imposed or strategic; a critique of the historically informed and biased Algonquin government structure; an account of Algonquin hiring practices that seems to exclude non-status Aboriginals; details about my personal band membership request—specifically the exclusionary language used and finally how the *Indian Act* informed language kit distribution. Unfortunately, these are characteristic examples of how a nation that claims to have unification as its goal has fallen short.

I strongly advocate that the Algonquin of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation review the manner in which they deny band membership and carefully reconsider aspects of Algonquin Enrolment Law. In addition, an extra effort is required to educate, empower, and include urban Algonquin. I suggest that non-localized Algonquin representation in urban centres, outside of Algonquin traditional territory, is fundamental if a final and conclusive treaty is desired.

I end my critique by offering the larger Algonquin body a particular perspective of cohesion when I promote an Algonquin understanding of a historical moment between the Big River People and Champlain. This Algonquin understanding of Champlain's displaced astrolabe, to that of Algonquin agency and resistance, could facilitate Algonquin unity and thus challenge the racist and sexist oppression imprinted via the *Indian Act* regime.

Through the process of employing personal family oral history, autobiographical material and situated knowledge, I produce an underlying narrative. I simultaneously illustrated and questioned colonial processes and located the intergenerational dynamics of Algonquin oppression, racism and sexism in current time and space. I provide this critique not to further alienate myself from the Algonquin of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation but rather to encourage them to build a just society that includes *all* descendants of the larger Algonquin nation.

Finally, in producing this essay, I take up Adams' challenge. I mobilize my voice to reveal aspects of internalized oppression that are contrary to the decolonization, freedom and liberation of Aboriginal people. In doing so, I also contribute to the opening of a space that encourages Aboriginal people to voice their concerns over issues of injustice from his or her subjugated subjectivity.

### **Biographical Note**

Lynn Gehl is a visually impaired Aboriginal student at Trent University where she is pursuing a Master's degree focusing on the politics of subjectivity and identity, in particular the ramifications of the *Indian Act*, blood quantum, and phenotype physiology in the healing journeys of non-status Aboriginal people.

### **Acknowledgments**

I am grateful for the teachings, encouragement, guidance, and editorial skills of Eva Mackey, Mariah Bat-Hayim and Nikolaus Karl Gehl. Their suggestions have served to improve this paper immensely. York University Continuing Education Scholarships, York University Anthropology Departmental book awards, an Allen T. Lambert Scholars award and a Casino Rama Scholars award supported my undergraduate studies during the production of this paper. Finally, the views and analysis expressed in this paper are mine and are not necessarily shared by any sponsoring organization, teacher or editor.

### **Notes**

1. When I use the term "Aboriginal" in this paper I am referring to status and/or non-status persons as defined or not defined by the *Indian Act*.
2. The terms nation-building, self-determination, and land claim are used interchangeably. Self-determination is the preferred term over self-government as the latter may translate to municipal-style governments on Indian reserves. See Monture-Angus 1999.

3. I am not implying that all Aboriginal men are preventing Aboriginal women from self-actualization; many Aboriginal men do support Aboriginal women in their struggle. I also do not intend to exclude Aboriginal women as victims of internalized oppression; often times it is status Aboriginal women who are perpetuating the continued subjugation of non-status Aboriginal women and their descendants.
4. It is important for me to qualify that Aboriginal people lost status for reasons other than marriage to a non-Indian. These included, but are not limited to, entry into the clergy, a good grasp of the English language, and an education. In addition, many Aboriginal people, for many reasons, were never registered as Indians as defined by the *Indian Act*.
5. I borrow the idea of "ruffling a few feathers" from Cora J. Voyageur in Long and Dickason 1996.
6. I say this because many *legal Indians* have invested too much energy and thought in the belief that only *legal Indians* are Aboriginal people.
7. The term enfranchise has been a huge source of confusion for me because, from my perspective, I have been disenfranchised from my community yet never enfranchised into White society. Therefore, in actuality from my perspective, and indirectly through my grandmothers, I have been doubly disenfranchised. Thus the assimilation process failed on both accounts, leaving me in a location of being unrecognized as White or Red.
8. Many people are not aware that the 1985 amendments to the *Indian Act* have created many discriminatory issues. See for example Gehl 2000.
9. Much of the information in this section is derived from literature that has been generated by the Algonquin Negotiation Department for the larger Algonquin community, referred to hereafter as AGLFN 1993.
10. My *kokomis* repeatedly made the suggestion that her *kokomis* lived in one of these wigwams with her children.
11. I understand that many status Aboriginal people live in urban settings; therefore, much of what I argue can also apply to them.

## Appendix A



CANADA

DEPARTMENT  
OF  
MINES AND RESOURCES  
INDIAN AFFAIRS BRANCHGolden Lake, Ont.  
January 30, 1945.Mrs. Annie Gagnon,  
190 Pem. St. West.,  
Pembroke, Ontario.

Dear Madam:

I am in receipt of a copy of your letter recently sent to the Indian Affairs Branch, Ottawa, with regard to your status as an Indian.

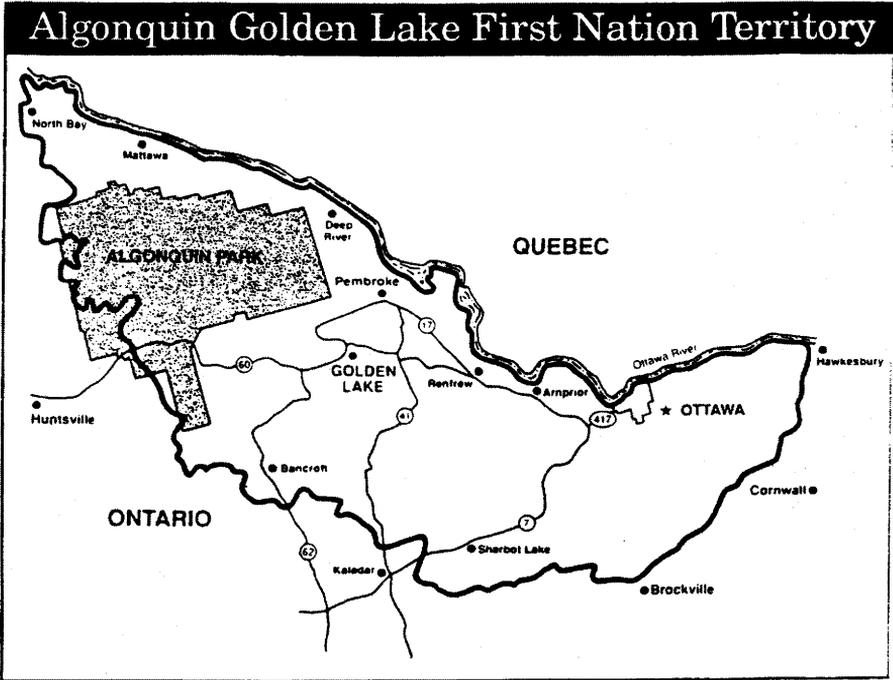
In reply I wish to inform you that you are not an Indian as defined by the Indian Act. At the time of your marriage to Joseph Gagnon, a white man, any rights you had as an Indian of the Golden Lake Band ceased, (Section 14 of the Indian Act), and you became a white woman.

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "H. P. Ruddy".

H. P. Ruddy,  
Indian Agent.

Appendix B



## Appendix C

Schedule "A"

A		
<b>Abanoketj, Kana</b>		July 21, 1863
<b>Abenawiskane, Simon</b>		1850 Census
<b>Abi-ta-na-gi-cham</b>		July 14, 1791
<b>Accainon (Wagi-non)</b>		July 19, 1798
	Athienon	July 14, 1791
<b>Achawikwane</b>		July 21, 1863
<b>Achginawes, Nowison</b>		July 21, 1863
<b>Achitamo, J. Bapt.</b>		1850 Census
	Atchitamo, Chabat	July 21, 1863
<b>Achitamo, Paul</b>		1850 Census
	Achitamong, Paul	1842 Census
<b>Agwaiac, Amable</b>		21 Aug 1850
<b>Ahnikowe, Simon</b>		21 June 1858
<b>Alandjicke, Ignace</b>		1842 Census
<b>Aiantchigi, Nlias</b>		July 21, 1863
<b>Aisiniakowtchi</b>		Mar 4, 1845
<b>Ajaoikonne, Paul</b>		1850 Census
<b>Ajan Kekapaa</b>		1842 Census
<b>Ajon, Francois</b>		1842 Census
	Achon, Francois	1850 Census
	An Jon	7 Oct 1843
		8 Oct 1843
<b>Akanache, Paul</b>		1850 Census
<b>Akawanje</b>		1842 Census
<b>Akokoatchi</b>		Mar 4, 1845
<b>Akowtchichi</b>		Mar 4, 1845
<b>Akwaiach, Amab</b>		Mar 1862
		July 21, 1863
	Akwaiach, Amable	1850 Census
<b>Akwitanakikwe, Marian</b>		1842 Census
<b>Amap, Joseb</b>		July 21, 1863
<b>Amap, Simo</b>		July 21, 1863
<b>Amiconce, Vessant</b>		25 Oct 1882
<b>Amikokiwe, Cecil</b>		1842 Census
<b>Amikonce, Xavier</b>		21 June 1858
<b>Amikonini, Antoine</b>		1842 Census
<b>Amikonini, Francois</b>		1850 Census
<b>Amikons, Simo</b>		July 21, 1863
	Amikons, Simon	1825 Census
		Aug 15, 1849
		21 June 1858
<b>Amikos, Sappier</b>		July 21, 1863

Appendix D

Province of Ontario District No. 87 Sub-District \_\_\_\_\_  
 Schedule No. 1.—Nominal Return of the Living.

Page 22 of 22 (Number of VCL)

No.	Name	Sex	Age	Married	Single	Widow	Orphan	Total	Number of Dependents	Occupation	Education		Religion		Remarks
											Male	Female	Method	Denomination	
1	Althaus	M	57							Teacher	High School	Methodist	Presbyterian		
2	Althaus	F	51								High School	Methodist	Presbyterian		
3	Althaus	M	53								High School	Methodist	Presbyterian		
4	Althaus	F	49								High School	Methodist	Presbyterian		
5	Althaus	M	47								High School	Methodist	Presbyterian		
6	Althaus	F	45								High School	Methodist	Presbyterian		
7	Althaus	M	43								High School	Methodist	Presbyterian		
8	Althaus	F	41								High School	Methodist	Presbyterian		
9	Althaus	M	39								High School	Methodist	Presbyterian		
10	Althaus	F	37								High School	Methodist	Presbyterian		
11	Althaus	M	35								High School	Methodist	Presbyterian		
12	Althaus	F	33								High School	Methodist	Presbyterian		
13	Althaus	M	31								High School	Methodist	Presbyterian		
14	Althaus	F	29								High School	Methodist	Presbyterian		
15	Althaus	M	27								High School	Methodist	Presbyterian		
16	Althaus	F	25								High School	Methodist	Presbyterian		
17	Althaus	M	23								High School	Methodist	Presbyterian		
18	Althaus	F	21								High School	Methodist	Presbyterian		
19	Althaus	M	19								High School	Methodist	Presbyterian		
20	Althaus	F	17								High School	Methodist	Presbyterian		
21	Althaus	M	15								High School	Methodist	Presbyterian		
22	Althaus	F	13								High School	Methodist	Presbyterian		
23	Althaus	M	11								High School	Methodist	Presbyterian		
24	Althaus	F	9								High School	Methodist	Presbyterian		
25	Althaus	M	7								High School	Methodist	Presbyterian		
26	Althaus	F	5								High School	Methodist	Presbyterian		
27	Althaus	M	3								High School	Methodist	Presbyterian		
28	Althaus	F	1								High School	Methodist	Presbyterian		
29	Althaus	M	0								High School	Methodist	Presbyterian		
30	Althaus	F	0								High School	Methodist	Presbyterian		

## Appendix E

### Algonquin First Nation Government Structure:

**Chief and Council:** Algonquin of Pikwàkanagàn  
Lisa Eshkakogan and Councillors



**Chief Executive Officer:** Tom Vincent



**Negotiation Team:**  
Federal Representation  
Provincial Representation  
Greg Sarazin—Chief Algonquin Negotiator  
Kirby Whiteduck—Algonquin Negotiator  
Allan Pratt—Legal Council  
Celena Rosler—Secretary



### **Algonquin Nation Negotiations Directive (ANND):**

Greater Golden Lake: Dale Benoit  
Bancroft/Baptiste Lake Region: Katherine Cannon  
Mattawa/North Bay: Gilbert Labreche  
Antoine Region: Dave Joannis  
Ottawa Region: Dan Kohoko  
Sharbot Lake Region: Doreen Davis  
Whitney Region: Robert LaValley  
Ardoch Region: Bob Crawford



**Regional Committees**



**The Larger Algonquin Body:**  
Status and non-status Algonquins accepted  
under Algonquin Law

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