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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA MORRIS

Working Paper Series

Ritual and Ceremony  
In a Contemporary Anishinabe Tribe

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Assistant Professor of Anthropology

*Faculty Center for Learning and Teaching  
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**Volume 1 Number 1**  
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**Faculty and Student Research**

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# Ritual and Ceremony In a Contemporary Anishinabe Tribe

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**Working Paper Volume 1, Number 1**  
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**THURSDAY AFTERNOON FACULTY SEMINAR  
SEPTEMBER 11, 2003**

**RITUAL AND CEREMONY  
IN A CONTEMPORARY ANISHINABE TRIBE**

This paper is drawn from my dissertation which was completed in December, 2002 and accepted at Michigan State University. I've been advised by the wise senior faculty to provide more background information than I normally would when addressing other anthropologists. I hope I have succeeded in this but please feel free to interrupt with any questions or requests for clarification.

**History of the tribe**

What we know about the Anishinabeq prior to European contact comes from a variety of sources: oral history and stories, archaeological research, ethnohistories, and accounts written by the first Europeans to contact them. As is the case with many indigenous peoples, nomenclature is somewhat problematic. This same people have been called Ojibwas (spelled variously), Chippewas, and Saulteaux or Saulteurs. They refer to themselves as *Anishinabeq*, meaning "the people" or "human beings." The French used the name Saulteaux, referring to the traditional gathering place of the Ojibwas, the rapids of the St. Mary's River that connects Lake Superior and Lake Huron. The French named this feature Sault (which means "falling water" in French) Ste. Marie and the cities that eventually grew on the Canadian and American sides of the river are still known by this name. Locals in both countries anglicized the pronunciation and call their cities "the Soo", pronounced "sue". Not surprisingly, the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians is known as the Soo Tribe, which

does cause some confusion since it sounds the same as the Sioux Tribe! I will refer to this group as the Soo Tribe.

The Anishinabeq called the rapids in the St. Mary's River *Bahweting* which means "rushing water". Many Indians gathered at Bahweting in the summer and fall for fishing, visiting old friends and meeting new people, and for ceremonies. They represented many different clans, bands, and tribes, a situation that later led to problems with claiming tribal territory and, later, gaining federal recognition for the Soo Tribe.

The first contact between Europeans and the Anishinabeq took place in 1634 when a young French adventurer, Jean Nicolet, arrived with several Ottawa guides. The Anishinabeq had heard of these mysterious people, the *Wemitigoji* or Frenchmen, who appeared to be dead (due to their pallor). After this initial meeting, the first large-scale encounter in their territories came in 1641 when a group of Jesuits ("blackrobes") was invited to visit. The Anishinabeq more readily embraced economic changes, especially in the form of improved technologies, while they continued to resist attempts to change their belief systems.

Several treaties were entered into with the Anishinabeq but it is often difficult to determine which groups were specifically included. The European, then American governments tended to create political entities to negotiate with, political entities that had no traditional existence or standing in the communities. In the late 1800s, various Anishinabe groups ceded great tracts of land in the Lake Superior region. In many treaties, Ojibwas negotiated to retain fishing and

hunting rights in their traditional territories, agreements that continue to be challenged in U.S. courts today.

Unlike many other tribes, the Anishinabeq of Michigan were not greatly affected by the U.S. government's removal policy of 1830. The U.S. government came to realize that removing groups of Indians was a very expensive and increasingly unpopular practice. It was also running out of land to warehouse the removed Indians as more and more settlers moved west. Some bands and tribes were allowed to remain in their traditional regions but were to be assimilated and eventually disappear as a separate people. Soon, communally owned tribal lands were being allotted to Indian families and individuals in another effort to force assimilation. In the Soo, the situation was dire as there was no reservation land set aside for the local Ojibwas and they were soon pushed back from the desirable riverside locations to the swamplands no one else wanted.

Fishing became difficult in the St. Mary's River with the 1855 construction of a system of locks to move boat traffic through the channel. The beloved Bahweting was forever changed by the massive project that also generates hydroelectric power. The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 provided for an end to allotments and sales of tribal land. The act set goals for tribes and bands to move toward self-governance and being chartered as federal corporations. Encouraged by this new philosophy, tribal elders in the Soo decided to organize and seek federal recognition. One tribal member donated forty acres so the tribe would have some sort of land base. The organization compiled a membership



roll, relying greatly on the federal government's Durant Roll of 1908-1910, and a tribal history as well as other documentation required to apply for federal tribal status. At the same time, the city of Sault Ste. Marie was growing and prospering but no improvements were made in the Indian part of town, which centered on Marquette Avenue and Shunk Road (known as the Mar Shunk neighborhood).

In 1972, the Original Bands was accorded federal recognition by the Commission of Indian Affairs and in 1975, the tribe adopted the name "The Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians". Official status for an Indian tribe means access to governmental assistance and, at the same time, increased federal interference. For the Soo Tribe, federal recognition brought empowerment, which they exercised almost immediately. In the mid – 1970's , the tribe successfully sued the City of Sault Ste. Marie over the administration of a Community Development Block Grant, none of which was to be spent on the Mar Shunk neighborhood (Cleland 1992:279). In 1979, the city agreed to spend close to \$6 million in the neighborhood, paving streets, putting in streetlights, improving the water supply, and building drains and sewers (Cleland 1992:279). The triumph still reverberates for tribal members, most of who can look back just twenty years and remember how poorly they lived in this community.

The most profound economic change for the Soo Tribe is the result of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988. The Soo Tribe's first casino has expanded more than eight fold and has become the pride of many Soo Tribe members. The tribe has since purchased land, built several more casinos in

other Soo Tribe population centers throughout the Upper Peninsula, and was recently the first tribe in the U.S. to open a casino on non-tribal land, in Detroit's Greektown neighborhood.

In less than thirty years, the Soo Tribe has traveled from a position of great poverty to a position of great wealth. The largest employer in the Upper Peninsula, the tribe owns more than twenty non-gaming businesses, several casinos, a minor league hockey team, two sports arenas, and has an annual operating budget of approximately \$200 million. The tribe also provides a number of services for its members, such as satellite offices in outlying communities, health centers, a cultural center, a school, and tuition assistance. They operate a comprehensive social services department, and a law enforcement department that includes police officers and judges. The tribe has taken over housing on two abandoned Air Force Bases and has purchased or constructed additional housing for tribal members.

The influence of the Soo Tribe is evident in the frequent visits made by politicians to meet with the elected officials. In the past, they were beneath notice but now they are visited by Presidential candidates, U.S. Senators and Congressmen, and governors. In 1995, Bernard Bouschor, Tribal Chairman, was Upper Peninsula Person of the Year. The irony of all of this attention is not lost on the tribe but neither are the implications of their new wealth. One local wit noted that the tribe has become "fiscal Republicans."

Local politicians have also learned to deal differently with the Soo Tribe. They have watched in amazement as the tribe, and its fortunes, have grown

rapidly. Conversations with city officials revealed mixed reactions to the success of the tribe. There is gratitude for the increased tourism to the area and the low unemployment rate. At the same time, there is concern over pressure on the existing infrastructure of the city, an issue discussed frequently with tribal officials. Some officials expressed disbelief that “those Indians” could run a multimillion-dollar business empire and predicted disaster sometime in the future. A few acknowledged the irony of the reversal of positions between the Mar Shunk residents and the rest of the city and thought it was time the tribe had some success.

Part of the process of federal recognition for tribes is deciding how the tribe will define its membership. This is perhaps the most controversial issue inside and outside of Indian Country. The Soo Tribe’s decision to define their membership through lineal ancestry rather than by establishing a blood quantum allowed it to expand its membership more quickly than could have been done through reproduction. Tribal membership in 1995 was just under 20,000. In 2002, membership has almost reached 30,000. The decision to define their descent in this way has met with disapproval from other Michigan tribes. In the competition for federal dollars, having a larger membership means a larger piece of the pie. In addition, the lack of a blood quantum requirement has left the Soo Tribe open to criticisms from Indians and non-Indians alike about being “real” Indians. Despite these tensions, Cleland notes

the federally recognized tribes have developed some excellent, cooperatively administered units, for example the Ottawa/Chippewa

Treaty Fishing Management Authority and the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission. [1992:293]

### **Interest in identity**

The Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians has experienced tremendous changes in the political, economic, and social spheres over the past three decades. With all of these changes has come an interest in tribal identity. My dissertation describes the identity-building efforts of various factions and age groups in the tribe. Following the lead of Victor Turner, Barbara Myerhoff, and Catherine Bell, I analyze the use of ritual in the creation and production of identity in the Soo Tribe and attempt to contribute to ongoing theoretical discussions by identifying the strategies used by various factions and age groups involving ritual. In doing so, I have sought to situate ritual as a strategic practice, what Catherine Bell names ritualization. Soo Tribe members act out ritualization in their efforts to educate others about their identity, to socialize the tribal youngsters in the tribal identity, and to express their unique status as a sovereign entity.

### **Ritual and ritualization**

I conducted fieldwork in northern Michigan over the course of about eighteen months. My project was of an applied nature and was originally proposed and then funded by the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians. To my knowledge, I am the first anthropologist to be funded by an Indian tribal entity at Michigan State University. The tribe expressed an interest in applied anthropological research leading to programs and concepts they could implement to improve and enhance a sense of tribal identification.

The working definition of identity which I used, and expanded upon, was the one suggested by the tribal administration when they contracted my services. This definition was concrete in its application: the tribal administration wanted their members to identify themselves publicly as Soo Tribe members. In other words, when asked, the tribal members should name themselves as Soo Tribe members instead of the more generic terms of "Indian," "Ojibwa," "Chippewa," or even "Anishinabe." I expanded the definition somewhat to include these more generic definitions of themselves as Indians, rather than simply as members of the Soo Tribe.

The subgroups or categories I used to divide the study population, the Corporate Indians, the Boomers, the Elders, and the Youngsters, are based partly on tribal categories and partly on the theory I use to analyze the use of ritual. Let me explain. First, the use of age categories by Soo Tribe members is common. For example, when standing in line for food at a ceremonial feast, people arrange themselves from eldest to youngest. Members who are reluctant to reveal their birth date are teased and gently ridiculed. I was able to utilize this cultural concept comfortably if loosely to working with my field data.

Secondly, the analytical categories I created and used also reflected the similar use of ritual by individuals who shared characteristics, many of which were age-related characteristics. The Elders shared certain concerns with one another, as did the individual Youngsters. The Corporate Indians and the Boomers belong to the same loose-defined age group and I have placed them in their respective categories based instead on attitudinal differences, with the

Corporate Indians focusing on the tribe as a corporate business entity and the Boomers focusing on the spiritual and traditionally-oriented aspects of the tribe.

The size of the Soo Tribe, more than 30,000, and its recent economic success (the largest employer in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, with gross revenues in excess of \$450 million in 2001) are two of the reasons for the tribe's concern with identity. Transformed by sudden wealth and a rapid increase in membership, due to the decision to define membership based on lineal descent (as opposed to blood quantum), the Soo Tribe has been struggling to create or maintain a sense of tribal cohesiveness and identity.

A brief exploration of the theories of ritual should begin with the work of Durkheim who created rigid categories to separate the secular or the profane from the sacred. This type of classification system means that rituals are sacred "fixed modes of action" based on religious beliefs. This is not a useful conceptualization when working with the Ojibwa belief system that does not make this sharp distinction but, rather, views spirituality as a part of everyday life.

Victor Turner's concept of ritual with its performance aspect is closer to the approach needed to analyze ritual activity in the Soo Tribe. Turner states that belief is an essential aspect of ritual, yet his work in performance seems to call more for the suspension of disbelief than for true faith-based belief. One of his students, Barbara Myerhoff, takes ritual in this interesting direction and argues that a successful ritual is one that is good enough that the participants agree to suspend disbelief or to at least not express their discontent openly: "Not all the participants involved need to be equally convinced or equally moved"

(1977:222).

Sally Moore, another of Turner's students, proposes a solution to the dichotomy she sees in concepts of ritual: stability and continuity contrasted with maneuverability and interpretability. Rather than choosing one or the other concept or abandoning the concept of ritual entirely, Moore proposes viewing ritual as a social process. She argues that when we conceptualize ritual as a process, we are able to account for the variability in the practice of ritual and situate ritual practitioners and ritual innovators in a central and active role.

A model developed by Catherine Bell, which she calls ritualization, allows a deeper understanding of the role of ritual in identity formation and reinforcement in the Soo Tribe. Catherine Bell seeks to refocus the discussion of ritual onto context of ritual practice and the role of ritual in everyday life. This requires a shift from ritual to ritualization, from an analysis of the action of ritual to an analysis of the strategy of ritualization. Bell states that "ritualization is first and foremost a strategy for the construction of certain types of power relationships effective within particular social organizations" (1992:197). In keeping with this concept, my research explored the contexts in which ritualization is effective and how tribal members practice ritualization to achieve particular goals.

Applying the concept of ritualization was critical to the analysis of ritual activities of various tribal actors. Ritualization conceptualizes ritual as strategy, thereby placing the Soo Tribe members in the center of the action. This approach allows the researcher to ask critical questions: "how does the actor use ritual strategically?; and "what motivates the actor to practice ritualization?"

Researchers can get at questions of interaction between actors in terms of ritualization. How does the ritualization of one actor or group of actors affect another group? What characterizes the individuals who share a mode or motivation of practicing ritualization?

## **The Groups**

In the case of the Soo Tribe, the groups of individual actors share modes of behaving strategically with ritual. As I mentioned earlier, these groups fall roughly into age categories, which I named the Corporate Indians, the Boomers, the Elders, and the Youngsters. The age groups differ in some respects but share a goal of identifying themselves with the larger tribal group.

### **Corporate Indians**

Of the several groups and factions I studied, the Corporate Indians are the least knowledgeable concerning rituals, symbols, and ceremonies. They are generally uninterested in the meanings of symbols and rituals or about the history of ceremonies. Their interest in tribal history and the past is mostly confined to information and data that can be used to further their goals, be that fighting for fishing rights or establishing the provenance of the tribe. The lack of interest or knowledge in the arena of ritual does not, however, impede their ability to use ritual strategically.

The willingness to hire others to take on certain tasks is part of the Corporate Indians' business mentality. They have become accustomed to hiring consultants and experts, from outside the Soo Tribe membership. This strategy



has been an effective one, as many tribal members lacked formal education and specialized skills.

The hiring of consultants has extended into the cultural aspects of the tribe. The Boomers most involved in the invention and production of new traditions and rituals are not Soo Tribe members. They are from a closely related tribe, the Bay Mills Indian Community, located nearby. The membership of the two neighboring tribes has sometimes been interchangeable as many Soo Tribe members are kin with the neighboring tribe. One man explained to me that he changed membership depending on what each tribe could do for him. A notoriously cranky Elder was said to change membership when someone in her current tribe made her angry. No matter how closely related the two tribes are, however, some tribal members expressed their dissatisfaction with “outsiders” performing such public ceremonies. These outsider Boomers work for the Soo Tribe in administrative capacities, and serve as cultural consultants.

Ojibwa language teachers have also been hired from outside the tribe, causing some consternation over regional dialects. A couple of teachers from Manitoulin Island, where the Ojibwa language retention is high, commented that Soo Tribe Elders frequently challenged them concerning the pronunciation of words. They were frustrated with this response since most of the Elders who criticized them were not fluent in Ojibwa but could recall how their parents or grandparents had pronounced certain words. On the other hand, the few fluent Ojibwa speakers in the Soo Tribe appeared to welcome the outside language

teachers and argued pragmatically that learning some version of Ojibwa was better than not speaking it at all.

The Corporate Indians have clear objectives involving the public and tribal image of the Soo Tribe. They see events such as the opening of a new tribal facility as an opportunity to communicate their version of the tribal image: successful, progressive, rooted in tradition. These somewhat contradictory elements are melded, sometimes awkwardly, in the ceremonies that mark the chosen events. Ritual elements are used in innovative ways, all the while the ritual specialist (the outsider Boomer) explains the “rightness” of the ceremony, its “traditional” Ojibwa character. These ritual specialists get a great deal of attention and are known widely outside as well as inside the tribe. They are frequently interviewed and photographed by the media and have collaborated on several writing projects, as cultural experts of the Ojibwas.

One tribal member joked privately that there is not anything for which the Corporate Indians will not find a blessing. This comment reveals the ambiguity that some tribal members feel about the Corporate Indians’ ritual strategies. Reactions to the Corporate Indians’ practice of ritualization depend somewhat on the participant-observers. Some observers find the ceremonies moving and a fitting expression of Ojibwa beliefs. Non-Indian observers are usually government officials and politicians. Because of their roles, I feel that their reactions, when interviewed, were not necessarily frank, but the general observable reactions of these individuals were surprise and pleasure. Critique of

the Corporate Indians' use of ritual was quiet and usually expressed privately, by some Elders and Boomers.

It was my sense that most traditionally oriented members are reluctant to criticize the Corporate Indians. This is expressed in their repeated praises for the many projects the Corporate Indians have chosen to fund; projects that help the traditionalists educate the tribe's membership, especially the children. The Culture Camp on Sugar Island, Bahweting School, and the Cultural Center (a place for weddings, funerals, naming ceremonies, etc.) are just some of the institutions funded and built by the Corporate Indians. It was also my impression that tribal members who are deeply involved with the tribe recognize the pragmatic nature of the work the Corporate Indians do to help the tribe. This makes their use of ritual in unorthodox ways more palatable to the Boomers and interested Elders.

The Corporate Indians do not use ritual in their private lives. They see it as another business tool and use it to achieve their goals. Their ritual activities are accepted by most in the tribe because their goals are seen as worthy and of benefit to all tribal members. It is my opinion that some of the more successful invented traditions, such as the inauguration ceremony for new board members, will become part of the tribe's culture, an expression of the changing and active nature of a society.

### **Boomers**

The Boomers are the most ritually active members of the tribe. They are responsible for maintaining and reviving Ojibwa rituals, such as rites of passage

and seasonal ceremonies. They practice rituals in their everyday lives, such as daily purification and organize larger celebrations. As a group, the Boomers are the most involved with the other groups in the tribe, maintaining close contact with the Elders, the Youngsters, and the Corporate Indians. In addition, they attempt to draw in and educate the disinterested or unknowledgeable members of the tribe. The Boomers also maintain contacts in the larger Indian and indigenous communities, using these networks to further causes that may affect the Soo Tribe directly or other Indians and indigenous peoples.

Many Boomers have learned tribal lore and traditions from Elders and through formal education. Some are self-conscious about their reliance on books or college courses, becoming defensive if questioned about the source of their information. Their identity is based on the incorporation of rituals and traditional values in their everyday lives, including the importance of family, community, and tribe. As such, the Boomers are involved in most aspects of the tribe's interests, especially in cultural and spiritual matters. Their goals coincide with the goals of the Corporate Indians, although their emphases are different. While the Corporate Indians use ritual and symbols to define the tribe as progressive while being rooted in tradition, the Boomers use ritual and symbols to remind the tribe's membership of its traditional roots as it experiences material and financial success.

The Boomers use ritual to reconstruct and retain a sense of Ojibwa identity for the Soo Tribe. As Bell notes, "The specifically 'ritual' construction of tradition and communal identity may be a powerful and effective

strategy...”(1992:231). Some Boomers modify or create rituals to serve specific public relations purposes. Others recreate or modify rituals for educational and community-building purposes. Still others perform rituals in the privacy of their homes, with only close family and friends present, because this is and has been a way of life for them. Boomers go into the tribal school and shape its curriculum to reflect Ojibwa values and traditions.

By drawing together the Corporate Indians, the Youngsters, the Elders, and a gradually increasing number of previously disinterested members, the Boomers are attempting to strengthen the tribe’s sense of unity. Many work closely with the Corporate Indians on efforts to present a positive image of the tribe while safeguarding the tribe’s unique cultural status. At the same time, the Boomers retain their own distinct identity by choosing a particular style of dress and devoting a great deal of time to spiritual and ritual activities. The occasional tensions between the Boomers and the Corporate Indians are defused by the many projects funded by the Corporate Indians that meet the goals of the Boomers, such as the Culture Camp on Sugar Island, Bahweting School, and the Cultural Center (a place for weddings, funerals, naming ceremonies, etc.) This dynamic as well as a commitment to tribal unity to use ritual in ways that enhance a sense of tradition and community for the Soo Tribe bind most Boomers closely to the more businesslike Corporate Indians.

### **Elders**

I should note that, unlike the other age groups, I included the disinterested Elders as well as more involved Elders. The primary reason I did so was that,

unlike the other age groups I analyzed, the disinterested Elders do have a great deal of contact with the tribe. That contact, however, is not in the ritualization context. The involvement of the disinterested Elders is, nonetheless, important to consider. They have publicly identified themselves, often for the first time in their lives, as Indians, as members of a tribe. Their reasons for doing so are primarily self-serving. These Elders want the free meals, the inexpensive vacations, casino coupons, and so on. Their interest in the political workings of the tribe is also based on self-interest, not on what is good for the tribe. I do not mean to imply that they are the only tribal members with their own interests at heart. However, since Elders are the group within the tribe that receives the most direct benefits from being tribal members, the disinterested Elders have the most incentive to be involved on whatever level.

For involved Elders, the tribe's financial success and accompanying support of Ojibwa cultural events has been a great boon. These Elders participate in sweats, talking circles, cultural and language workshops, naming ceremonies, funerals and weddings, as well as powwows. Many Elders are powwow dancers, spending time and money on putting together their regalia. They are honored guests at feasts and all tribal gatherings and gain a great deal of positive attention by joining in the ritualization efforts of the tribe. They use ritual strategically to gain the approval of other members and to become or remain active players in the life of the tribe. They also practice ritualization altruistically in their efforts to share what they know with younger members of the tribe.

There is a sense of excitement and pride in this segment of the Elders. They have lived in poor housing and have struggled to find work. They and their loved ones have struggled with substance abuse. They have seen so many of their people die of disease and the effects of life-long poverty. Many of them dropped out of school, either from economic need or to escape the discrimination of the educational system. What they see happening now in the tribe seems, in their own words, “almost like a miracle”. Tribal members have jobs, the children can attend their own school, and the tribal community can join together to hold ceremonies without fear of repercussions. Medical and substance abuse treatment are available for all and much of the substandard housing has been destroyed. The future seems rosy to the Elders who still have trouble believing how well the tribe is doing.

Some Elders have struggled with the rapid pace of economic and social change in the tribe. Some do not want to leave their old homes, even those that are shacks. Their children and grandchildren beg them to move to better housing, even offering to put the new home on the same lot so their Elders will feel at home. A frustrated middle-aged daughter commented to me that her parents seemed to mistake being poor with being Indian. They were afraid that they would lose something of themselves, of their culture, by improving their economic situation.

An elderly man, “Joe”, expressed his own frustration one day, after receiving a visit from a tribal housing representative who wanted permission to

demolish his home and replace it with something better. Joe believes that the tribe is more worried about its image and reputation than his welfare.

In this particular instance, Joe's adult children purchased a pre-fabricated house for their parents and set it up on the large lot their parents own, after destroyed several shacks and lean-tos to make room. They also removed loads of wood, metal and wire pieces, and old tires from the property, items that Joe had salvaged over the years. Joe and his wife were pleased that their children cared enough and were successful enough to purchase the new home. Joe did express dismay at his "stuff" being cleared away and hurriedly squirreled away some prized salvage material. He and Mrs. Joe refused to let their old house be torn down, however, and the children could not change their minds. The last time I visited the elderly couple, I found them continuing to live in their old, dangerously dilapidated house during the day and in the new house in the evenings, when their adult children were more likely to visit.

This type of situation will probably resolve itself as the tribe's Elders die out and are replaced by Elders who have more experience with the relative prosperity of the tribe. Most Elders are pleased with the changes in the tribe and take advantage of the particular benefits that attract them. For some Elders, this simply means getting a discount at the casino restaurant. For other Elders, it means the opportunity to participate in the ritual activities of the tribe and to wield some influence, particularly in the ritual sphere, by virtue of their years.

### **Youngsters**

I did not intend to interview children specifically, in part due to the



“vulnerable” nature of minors in the eyes of IRBs. However, I was constantly thrown into contact with children through my own child’s life in the Soo and I was ignoring a powerful cultural belief among the Anishinabeq. Children should be heard, should be paid attention to. I spent the most time with the children of Boomers and they are overrepresented in this account.

Unlike their parents, most of who were exposed to Christian ritual and doctrine, Boomer children have a casual, taken-for-granted attitude toward Native ceremonies and rituals. For Boomers, many of whom have some college background, the role of Christianity in the attempted dissolution of Indian society is clear. For Boomer children, this history may capture them on an intellectual level but it rarely has the emotional impact that many of their parents feel. The children are non-Christian because of their cultural upbringing, rather than as a conscious political statement. This situation, at times, has elicited ambivalent reactions from Boomer parents who, while they are proud of the environment they have created for their children, may wonder if the Youngsters appreciate the sacrifices of their Elders.

This dynamic is common in social movements that have multigenerational effects, such as the Women’s Movement (Ferree and Hess 1985) and the Civil Rights Movement (Mendel-Reyes 1995). Boomers in the Soo Tribe are beginning to respond in much the same ways as others have, by repeating stories of past struggles, by identifying “heroes” and role models, and with various attempts to codify the history of the tribe, as understood primarily by the Boomers. A potent tool for this last effort is the use of the Internet. Like many

organizations, the Soo Tribe's use of the Internet has grown rapidly, the Internet being a powerful tool for communicating with far-flung members. It is also a way of communicating with their Youngsters, who are more likely to access the Internet and "check out" the tribal webpage than to read a book about their tribal history.

The Boomer children are using ritual strategically, with many of the same goals as other age groups in the tribe. Two of the goals of Boomer children's ritualization that may be shared with other tribal members are the desire to express one's individuality, and the desire to express one's membership in the tribe. Wanting to express one's unique individuality may be a particularly significant goal for Boomer teenagers, but may also be present for adult tribal members. One expression of individuality can be seen in the wide range of dance regalia created by dancers to express their personal tastes. This desire for individuality must be balanced with the other shared strategy in ritual participation: the affirmation of membership in the larger group of the tribe.

Of particular interest in the analysis of the Boomer children's strategic use of ritual is gaining of adult approval. Youngsters who participate in rituals receive a great deal of positive reinforcement and attention. The desire to please others, in this case, their parents and other adults, is a powerful reason to participate in rituals. This goal or incentive may be present for adult tribal members, as well, but for some adults, the decision to identify themselves publicly as tribal members results in disapproval from family members. This is not a problem for Boomer children. I did observe some non-Boomer children becoming involved in

ritual activities. The children's parents are in the Corporate Indian group and do not participate in tribal rituals. These parents reacted to their children's interest with approval and support, one mother commenting "the kids should learn some of the traditional Indian knowledge."

For troublesome adolescents, participation in tribal rituals usually means being given more leeway and may receive lesser or no punishments for misdeeds. The Youngster's participation in rituals is seen as making an effort to "walk in the right path." This can be a powerful tool for an adolescent or child. I observed several students at Bahweting School who would have faced suspension or even expulsion at another school. In pleading for leniency, every one of these students promised to be "more traditional", to go to ceremonies and to participate in tribal affairs. They argued, successfully, that these activities would change them into better people, into better Indians.

### **Summary**

Ritualization is a powerful tool for analysis in Native American and Native Canadian studies, as indigenous individuals and populations seek to assert their identity within and outside of mainstream society. The history of the relationships between indigenous peoples and federal governments in North America has been marked by changes in how indigenous peoples are defined, how they are identified. The pressures of colonization, warfare, and disease have forced indigenous populations in North America and elsewhere to reconceptualize themselves, to seek an identity that meets their needs.

The Ojibwas of Michigan, like all indigenous inhabitants of the U.S., have experienced radical changes in their lives over the past 350 years. Drastic population loss coupled with the introduction of disruptive technology and conflicting belief systems further eroded the traditional patterns of Ojibwa life. War and allegiances, changes in governments, and then shifting government policies helped to destabilize band and tribal systems of control. Many, Indian and non-Indian, predicted the demise or disappearance of all Indians in the U.S.

The Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, like many other thriving tribes, has proven these predictions wrong. They are financially successful beyond even their wildest dreams. Yet their past is not erased, and is not without continued effect. Centuries of culture contact, the lack of a land base, intermarriage, language loss, poverty and oppression, all of these shape the contemporary Anishinabeq.

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