

Tribal Members: A Surprisingly Diverse Group

Elizabeth Arbuckle Wabindato, Ph.D.

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Introduction

Are reservations insular communities with residents who are completely out of touch with mainstream America? Have all urban Indians dropped from their tribes to embrace pan-Indianism? Have tribal members who have moved to the border town done so to distance themselves from the reservation? These are all assumptions many people make about tribal people. This research attempts to learn how tribal members view their tribal identity. It finds that tribal people are much more diverse than these narrow suppositions suggest.

Because an American Indian tribe is comprised of essentially one group of people, the tribal members, one might expect a very high level of homogeneity, especially among the reservation residents. However, this research finds that today's American Indian tribe is composed of a diverse group of people with many different tribal identities. Tribal people have accumulated different life experiences, made different decisions and exercised different opportunities, which have created an identity-diversity within the tribe.

Conceptual Framework

This work begins with tribal member citizenry as the starting point with residency locations as secondary in importance. Many studies which look at American Indians in the cities tend to focus on the urban Indian experience. (Cornell, 1998; Fixico, 2000) Respondents can come from many different tribes and may or may not be enrolled; or the study can focus on one particular person or tribe. These works explore how city based American Indians navigate the urban experience, often looking for common American Indian experiences. It may include a discussion of feelings of belonging to a tribe or missing the homeland, but the focus is still on the individual as an urban Indian, not a tribal member.

At the other end of the spectrum, research done on reservations tends to be very narrow, focusing on the people and problems of the reservation community. (Densmore, 1979;) Off-reservation members are generally not a component of these tribal overviews or studies, which leaves out often a large population of the tribal membership.

There are three problems with continuing down this path in tribal political identity research. First, it does not explore the rich dimensions of a person's identity. Urban Indians may or may not share commonalities with other American Indian urbanite dwellers. Second, when reading these two strands of research, the reader is left believing these "two" peoples are just that, two different kinds of people. There may be some validity to the argument since environment plays a large factor in the development of culture, ideas and opportunities. However, there is equal validity in the argument that there is one absolute common link between urban and

reservation enrolled tribal members. They are all tribal citizens. And they do not necessary need to be thought of as two peoples all of the time in research, but can be seen as members of the one group of people, their tribe. Where environmental factors differ, the tribe remains the unifying factor. Third, there are thousands of tribal members who live in reservation border towns or other small towns and small cities across the United States. These people are often missed in American Indian research.

Previous research on reservation-based political ideologies suggest blood quantum, age and ties to tradition are salient factors in determining political factions. (Bee, 1999; Biolsi, 1992; Lopach, Brown and Clow, 1998)

“Reservation political culture is influenced by an extremely conservative outlook which cherishes the past and is tied to age and bloodline. Elderly and full-blood Indians, especially, tend to emphasize treaty rights, the longstanding role of the federal government and its obligation to the tribes, and even the tribe’s modern constitution. While younger and more progressive Indians (usually mixed bloods) work to hasten the end of colonial rule, more traditional elements on the reservation fear the termination of Bureau protection and federal benefits and want to avoid constitutional revision and the risks of Indian self-government.” (Lopach, Brown and Clow, 1998: 190-191)

Thomas Biolsi found, when studying the Indian Reorganization Act inspired Lakota Constitution was “fear among fullblood people that the landless mixedbloods would get control of tribal government and use it to enrich themselves at the expense of fullblood people, who were less familiar with non-Indian ways.” (Biolsi, 1992: 90) In this instance, blood quantum appears to be important to tribal members.

My research did not find that blood quantum or age were necessarily salient factors in Bad River tribal identity formation. I would not characterize some individuals as “traditionalists” and others as “modernists”. Still, there is evidence that ties to tradition, land and community, as well as amount of contact with non-Indians; all influence the formation of a tribal member’s identity.

In each of the following sections, there is a discussion of the various categories within each group. These categories are not all-inclusive, meaning there are probably many tribal members who do not ‘fit’ into any particular category. This work does not propose that there are any absolutes. These are meant to be descriptions to discuss tribal identity and how people locate and describe themselves.

Categories were created based on responses by study participants regarding their sense of belonging to the tribe, the connections they have to each other, their life experiences and choices. This study did not look at what caused people to feel as though they belong to one group more than another, so it cannot address the specific causes of these group formations. This work is important to the field because it challenges the idea of non-self selected indicators like blood quantum and age as defining factors in identity development.

Methods

This project is an exploratory, qualitative study. It is not intended to be a representative sample but it does provide some information on how tribal members are thinking about their tribal sense of belonging and the sovereignty of their tribe.

The results presented in this paper are part of a larger study which looked at the relationship between a sense of belonging and sovereignty among the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, located on Lake Superior in northern Wisconsin. Results regarding the identity findings are presented in this paper.

Grounded Theory

I utilized grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) for my qualitative study of American Indian tribal identity. Grounded theory is unique from most forms of social science inquiry, in that it does not begin with assumed facts and a testable hypothesis. Instead, data collection process generates a hypothesis and eventually, a theory. The purpose of this research was to discover theory of tribal belonging.

This approach works extremely well for studying American Indian tribal identity because this area of research is not well-developed. Therefore I do not have as many leads from current data sets as other areas offer for evaluation. New ground must be broken in order to learn something about tribal communities and governments.

Also, I felt it was the most culturally sensitive approach because it did not require respondents to stay in a structured falsifiable study. It allowed them some power in determining what I should know about tribal identity. Through this process, I was able to learn more than if I had created a testable hypothesis for verification. In this community, I was respectful of their culture, which believes people will teach what they think you should or need to know. This study did not constrain them, but merely guided them through the process of self-exploration on tribal identity.

Constant Comparative Method

I used constant comparative method, where theories on tribal identity developed through the process of simultaneously collecting information, coding interviews, and analyzing my data. This is also very culturally sensitive, because like the circle of life this community celebrates, there are no stopping points. Life is a continuous circle of learning, where you make small adjustments in your thinking and learning causing you to turn slightly. However, there are no end points, no sharp corners that cut off one section of your learning from another. This approach respects and actually in some ways, patterns this worldview of learning.

The constant comparative method requires a keen attention to detail noting any small changes in kinds of information received. While still in the interviewing phase, I began coding my data. While coding comments for category assignment, I compared it to previous comments. This approach, although time consuming, I believe effectively pointed me in the right direction for generating accurate categories, which would lead to theory development. I also made notes of my reactions to the interviews while coding data, which helped to see an emergent theory.

Data was collected until I reached a saturation point, where I was not learning anything new to develop my categories

How did I get my categories? Answers were grouped by shared properties, where people were saying similar things about their feelings of tribal belonging. They discussed how they felt about the tribal community, or the continuum of people. They

Participant Selection

Only enrolled Bad River tribal members were interviewed in this study because it is designed to learn about tribal sovereignty, as well as any possible links between sovereignty and belonging, from the citizens of the tribe. The Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa has 6,292 tribal members on the official tribal rolls. (Bad River Enrollment Office, 2003) It is interesting to note that according to the 2000 United States Census, there are only 2,738 self-identifying Bad River members.

According to the Bad River Constitution, to become a tribal member: you must be a descendent of an original allottee; cannot be enrolled in another tribe; and must be enrolled within sixty days of your birth. There is an adoption process for those who go past the sixty days, where new members are voted in by current members on a referendum ballot.

The Bad River Reservation is approximately 125,000 acres located on the Lake Superior coast of northern Wisconsin, including a small tract on the eastern side of Madeline Island in Chequamegon Bay. The tribe, as a political entity, and individual tribal members now own about

75 percent of the reservation land. It has become checker-boarded over the years by white land owners or timber companies buying much of the reservation land.

About five percent of the reservation is developed for business or residential usage. Most of this development lies on or near the U. S. Highway 2 corridor, which crosses the northern portion of the reservation. The remaining ninety-five percent of the reservation is left natural and wild. This is partly due to choice by tribal members and partly due to an inability to develop it. The reservation is located on an enormous wetland. More than 16,000 acres make up the Bad River and Kakagon sloughs, which has an expansive water system. One respondent describes the reservation land this way:

“I have grown attached to the simplicity of the beauty of this reservation...In my growing up days, I hunted ducks, swam in the river, fished in the Bad River and White River. In the winter, I skated on the river and I went sledding down the hill on the railroad tracks.... It is a paradise with the watersheds, waterfall, many fur-bearing animals running free, geese, ducks, mudhens, beaver, muskrats, deer, occasionally an elk or moose, and bear.”

Currently, about one-sixth of the tribal population lives on the reservation; one-sixth lives in Ashland, a border community; and one-sixth lives in Southeastern Wisconsin. The remaining half of the tribal population lives in rural areas, small towns, other urban areas or other reservations.

Three locations were selected as sites for data collection: Bad River, the reservation homeland; Ashland, a border town; and Milwaukee, an urban area with a large population of Bad River tribal members.

The Bad River Reservation About 920 tribal members live on the reservation. There are four main housing communities where the majority of reservation residents live – Old Odanah/Diaperville, (new) Odanah, Frank’s Field/Aspen Acres, and Birch Hill. About fifty tribal member homes are scattered along Highway 2 and down side roads outside of these communities. Odanah houses the government headquarters and all enterprises. All of the housing communities are located along Highway 2.

Of the 460 tribal member homes on the reservation, the Housing Authority owns and manages just over 200 houses. This means that almost half of the homes on the reservation are federally designated and operated as low-income housing. However, this is changing as the Housing Authority is actively encouraging tribal members to become home owners through a rent-to-own program.

The Bad River Casino opened in 1991 and changed the economic and demographic structures of the reservation tremendously. Unemployment rates dropped dramatically, while at the same time, the reservation population grew as more tribal members moved to the reservation or area find work at the casino. The tribe has put much of its casino revenue into creating jobs in other departments and enterprises.

The tribe is the largest employer on the reservation and the second largest employer in Ashland County. The Bad River Lodge and Casino employs about 250 people. The administration and other enterprises employ about 220 people. The tribe also operates the following enterprises: a grocery store, gas station, restaurant, smoke shop, construction company, and day care. Tribal administration departments include realty, natural resources, accounting, legal, enrollment, general administration and education.

The tribe provides most local public services such as a large social services department, health clinic and pharmacy, volunteer fire department, water and sewer department for the housing communities, a library, Head Start, a non-accredited alternative high school and a newly developed police department. Wisconsin is a Public Law 280 state, which means the state has criminal and some civil jurisdiction on the reservation. Bad River, along with other tribes, has entered a new era and is now sharing jurisdiction on the reservation. The Ashland County Sheriff's office shares jurisdiction on the reservation with the Bad River Police Department.

Ashland An estimated 918 tribal members live in Ashland, the town just outside the reservation. It is a mostly non-Native neighboring town of about 8,900 people. Many tribal members live there either by choice or because they cannot find housing on the reservation. These members are not technically reservation residents but many of them are involved in reservation community events, go to the casino, work for the tribe, work at the Ashland-based Bureau of Indian Affairs Great Lakes office, access tribal resources like the pharmacy, or have spent their childhoods on the reservation and now live in town. Some members have no contact with the reservation or its residents.

Ashland city limits begin about a half-mile from the western border of the reservation, which lies about ten miles from Odanah. Located on Highway 2 along Chequamegon Bay, Ashland is the county seat and the largest town in the county. Almost all Bad River residents utilize Ashland's restaurants, movie theater, bars, Wal-Mart, banks, clothing stores, car dealerships, grocery store, and schools.

Milwaukee For the purposes of this project, Milwaukee and its surrounding suburbs were chosen to study Southeastern Wisconsin, which includes cities like Madison, Manitowoc, Kenosha and Racine. Milwaukee is derived from the Algonquin word Millioki, which means

“gathering place by the waters.” It was a logical, traditional meeting place for many tribes including Chippewa, because it is located on an area where three rivers flow into Lake Michigan. According to the 2000 United States Census, Milwaukee is the 19th largest city in the United States with a population of 596,974 in the city proper and about 1.5 million in the four-county metropolitan area, Milwaukee, Waukesha, Ozaukee and Washington. The city covers nearly 96 square miles and is located on the shores of Lake Michigan. It is the largest city in Wisconsin.

Although Milwaukee is known to have well-established ethnic neighborhoods with clear boundaries, there is no concentrated neighborhood of Bad River tribal members or a predominantly American Indian neighborhood. Bad River members live scattered in all parts of the city and across different socioeconomic strata. Some members do factory work, while others are construction workers, lawyers, business owners, police officers and retail employees. There are approximately 1,100 Bad River members in the Southeastern Wisconsin region. For these members, the reservation is still reachable in one day’s drive, as it is about a six hour drive from Milwaukee.

Milwaukee has a large, active urban Indian community. There is an American Indian Health Clinic, Native American churches, an American Indian Chamber of Commerce, and a large yearly autumn festival known as Indian Summer, with all-Native rock bands, poets, foods, powwow, comedians, etc. The Milwaukee urban Indian community consists of American Indians from many different tribes across the country, and non-Indians who are interested in American Indian issues.

Interview Style – Family Interviews

I considered various interview settings when designing this project. Because Indian people have had a long history with academic researchers and data collection that has not always worked out well for them, it was important to respect this concern. Therefore, I allowed the subject matter to lead the research methods, instead of choosing a method that is well-established in the field. I thought it was important the methods be guided by the customs of the research subject area, the tribal world, to most accurately assess what is happening in that world.

Family relationships are important to Bad River people. Therefore, I created family-group interview settings for data collection. Family groups are defined as configurations of various groupings: spouses, partners, parents-children, siblings, cousins, in-laws, uncle-aunt-niece-nephew, etc. Groupings were allowed to form naturally, with one key respondent selecting the co-respondents. Respondents varied across gender, age and relationship arrangements, thus tapping into several viewpoints.

The family group approach had a drawback in that some people may not have anyone with whom to share an interview. Then, it would turn out to be an individual interview or a missed opportunity. In these instances, individual interviews were conducted. The interviews still provided useful information for the study, as well as offering insight into the family group approach. If they had been disallowed, criteria for being in the study would be limited to those who have family, which all live in the same place. Individual interviews were conducted for different reasons. Sometimes a person did not have any family nearby. Other reasons included: it was logistically easier to do it alone; the respondent approached did not want anyone else there; no one else wanted to join in; or someone cancelled at the last minute.

Number of Interview

I conducted eleven interviews on the reservation with a total of nineteen respondents. Four of those interviews were with individuals while the others were family groups. I conducted ten interviews in Ashland with a total of eleven respondents. Nine of those interviews were with individuals. Seven interviews were conducted in Milwaukee with a total of thirteen respondents. Five of those interviews were with individuals. I found that people were forthcoming in their responses whether they were alone or with family members.

A snowball sampling technique was employed, where I began with friends and acquaintances, who then referred me to other potential participants. An effort was made to include people in this study who were very involved in tribal or Indian activities as well as people who were not very involved.

Themes

This study concentrated on five themes which I believe to be important to sovereignty and belonging. The first theme is all groups are concerned with the *preservation of a people*, which looks at the people as a uniquely defined community. They share a common history and ancestry which binds them as a people. The second theme is groups want to *establish or maintain a land or territory*. All groups wanted some type of recognized bounded territory, which they view as their homeland. Also, having jurisdiction over a specified territory is a key component of sovereign recognition. The third theme is the desire to *preserve a culture*. For many, this is very closely tied to preserving the people because culture is seen as a binding factor for the group. The fourth theme is the people's *desire for self-government*, which is the heart of sovereignty. Indigenous people want control over the situations which impact their daily lives, as well as control over their destiny as a people. The right to make one's own decisions is vitally important to them. The fifth theme, which does not apply to all groups, is a *desire for international recognition as a separate nation*.

These five themes provided a framework for question construction and response analysis. The interview process included an in-depth open ended survey, which were tape recorded and later transcribed. It also included a shorter written questionnaire. I looked to see what their responses about land or rights to self-govern told me about sovereignty and belonging. I found that every theme provides critical detail to better understand the overall pictures of sovereignty and belonging.

I argue in the following pages that Bad River tribal members have very different concepts of belonging to the tribe. Their personal feelings of belonging, how others view them and different life experiences inside and outside the tribe have created interesting subgroups of tribal members within each location site.

Constant Comparison: How I came up with my categories

In order to better understand this phenomenon, patterns were sought among people living in the various locations. I looked for how people within these sites differ regarding their sense of tribal belonging and involvement. Therefore, this work looks at not only how people at the three sites differ across locations, but also how they differ within those locations. Previous research indicates differences among members are drawn following blood quantum lines. They found “full-bloods” have a different worldview than “mixed-bloods”. (Biolsi, 1992; Lopach, Brown and Clow, 1990) My research finds that blood quantum is not a salient factor for this tribe, but tribal involvement and life experiences are very important in defining worldviews and drawing group boundaries.

Homeland – Bad River

The Bad River Indian Reservation is located in northern Wisconsin on Lake Superior and has approximately 900 tribal members living there. In general, homeland residents say they like to live on the reservation because they enjoy the fellowship of their tribal community and feel a strong connection to the land.

“Look around here and compare it to other lands. On the rez, we have everything - game, fish, wild rice, scenery, whatever, we have it...The rez is nice. You go outside and breathe the clean air. You don't have to worry about anything like in the big cities. You can go walking and not worry about getting mugged. You can leave your garage door wide open or doors unlocked and no one bothers anything. You can't do that in a big city. It's a complete different culture there. Up here you can be very trusting. Down there, you have to bar everything.”
- Reservation resident

Because the reservation is comprised of essentially one group of people, Bad River members, one might expect a very high level of homogeneity, but they can have very different feelings of belonging. People on the reservation have led different lives, made different choices and garnered different experiences. This study finds there are actually four different identity groups on the reservation: Lifelong Homelanders, those who have always lived on the reservation; Scouts, those who have lived away from the reservation for a very short time; White Worldologists, those who have lived away from the reservation for a substantial amount of time; and Newcomers, those who are relatively new to the reservation.

Lifelong Homelanders

“It’s all I’ve ever known. It’s home.” - Lifelong Homelander

Lifelong Homelanders, as the name suggests, have always lived on the reservation. They have a special unbroken history with the land and all of the people who have lived on it during their time. They have a very strong connection to the tribe and the community. Most Lifelong Homelanders are children or young adults but there are still some older adults and even elders who have always lived on Bad River.

The Lifelong elder Homelanders have a unique relationship with Bad River because they have witnessed the many changes in Bad River over their lifetimes. They saw the difficult years when the community suffered tremendous loss through a tuberculosis epidemic. They remember when Odanah was still located on the Bad River in the 1930’s and 40’s, and it was a thriving city with movie theaters, several shops, a very busy lumber mill, a dominant Catholic school and church, and many white neighbors. Once the mill closed, they witnessed another great change in their community as several of their friends and relatives left the reservation for places like Duluth, Chicago and Milwaukee to find work.

Lifelong elder Homelanders remember the very lean years of poverty when they grew their own vegetable gardens; fished and trapped just to get food on the table; and chopped wood taken from the surrounding forests to heat their homes. Bad River has served them not only as a residential community but it has also been a food and energy source. Most importantly, it is a place they have come to rely on as sustaining in the most traditional sense of the word.

One of the respondents, currently in her 80’s, has lived on the reservation since she was born. She says she cannot imagine living anywhere else. During the lean years, her husband had to leave to find work in the city but she remained. They agreed they wanted to raise their children

on the reservation in their community, not in a distant city. So she stayed with the children and her husband came home most weekends.

There are also many younger people who choose to stay in the community where they were raised although housing, employment and educational opportunities are limited. One respondent in her early 20's said she wants to stay near her family and friends. She thinks she could make more money in a city but says she has no plans for leaving. "I would get so homesick. I couldn't stand it." The young people enjoy the benefits of living on Bad River as well including participating in community and cultural events.

Lifelong Homelanders say they stay on the reservation because they enjoy living on their homeland with their fellow tribal members. They love the land and its sustaining qualities. It is their community and maintaining that community is very important to them, it helps to define who they are.

Scouts

The Chippewa had a tradition of sending Scouts from the tribe to learn about a new area, search for food, or keep an eye on potential enemies. These emissaries never considered themselves as anything but tribal members commissioned to do a specific assignment. Today's Scouts are similar in that they do not see their time away as permanent but instead as a means to an end. They are on their own mission with a purpose.

Scouts are tribal members who were raised in the community but lived off-reservation for a very short time to achieve a limited goal. Scouts never established a permanent home off the reservation nor did they ever intend to create a new permanent life off the reservation. They share very similar viewpoints regarding the homeland as Lifelong Homelanders, meaning they view it as their only home. For example, a tribal member might go to college and then return to the reservation; or join the military and return to the reservation after her completion of duty.

One respondent says she left the reservation because of her husband's military service but they returned as soon as he was discharged. They had always intended to return and raise a family but were forced to leave to fulfill a military obligation.

When asked if they have always lived on Bad River, Scouts answer 'yes, except for the war, or except when I went to Haskell'. These times away are seen as exceptions to the norm.

Scouts differ culturally from Lifelong Homelanders in that they have also experienced life off the reservation and learned how outside influences can drastically change their tribal

world. And because they know what the outside world offers, they are concerned how this can affect their tribal community.

“I worry about connectedness. In the last fifteen years, the rez has changed into a new community with gaming. But this decade is a blip. It’s hard to pinpoint what the future will bring.”
- Scout

Because Scouts have a broader knowledge of available resources outside the reservation, they can contribute a great deal to their community when they work for the tribe or serve on Council. They are often in excellent positions to succeed in these settings because they relate well with their fellow community members and they have additional knowledge they can bring to the table to advance the goals of the tribe, much like the Scouts of past.

Scouts are also more knowledgeable about the tribal community and available resources. They understand why local residents would not want a particular area to be developed and they know the tribe has a limited budget and is often grant dependent. Scouts recognize the limitations of their tribe and community and tend not to create unrealistic expectations.

White-Worldologists

“(Lifelong Homelanders) don’t know what the outside world is like. This place is not even the real world. This place pampers people.” – White-Worldologist

White-Worldologists have spent a substantial amount of time away from the reservation, living and working usually in white communities. They have become adept at navigating the white world of mainstream America. Sometimes these members come and go frequently from the reservation, picking up the threads of their old lives in the city or elsewhere.

They are generally comfortable in the white world and around other groups of people but maintain a very strong connection to their tribe. It is so strong that at some point, it drew them home. They also usually have a very strong connection or a desire to connect to the tribal community. The community is something they could not access while they were away from the homeland and it is important in their current sense of belonging, to be a part of that tribal community. One White-Worldologist explains why he came back to the reservation:

“While I was still in Milwaukee, I said, I’m going to move up north where things are so slow and quiet, I can just totally relax. I can go up there, get a job and go home and then I’m free. I don’t have this BS here in the city. (But) since I’ve been home, I’ve never been so busy.”
- White-Worldologist

White-Worldologists come back with skills learned in mainstream America, as well as different viewpoints. This influx can be both positive and negative for the community. Most say they want to become involved in the tribe and “give back” by using their skills. Many White-Worldologists were raised on the reservation who left shortly after high school graduation to find employment. Others were not raised on the homeland but moved there in their adulthood.

Sometimes White-Worldologists return with negative social behavior like gang participation and drug use. This is strongly resisted by most local community members. As one local member says, “We’re welcoming to tribal members, but we don’t want any child molesters here.”

Some White-Worldologists become very frustrated because the reality of tribal life does not match their expectations. First they are accustomed to the financial resources and education levels of communities outside the reservation and are frustrated by the lack of resources and sometimes, skills on the reservation. Second, they often come back with unrealistic expectations of fixing the tribe by utilizing their own skill set. But more often than not, their dreams of saving the tribe are crushed when they realize the tribe or tribal people will not or cannot accommodate this new vision.

It is difficult for a White-Worldologist to understand that tribal leaders and members may have alternative ways of handling situations than they are accustomed to in the white world. They see some tribal member behavior and decision-making as backwards and purposefully difficult. One resident describes the tribal government like this:

“It’s almost like a Boss Hogg (from the Dukes of Hazzard) situation. You go through a place where there’s no stop sign, and then they come and put one up right behind you and give you a ticket. That’s the way it is here.” - White-Worldologist

White-Worldologists express great frustration with some tribal employment policies like the five-day funeral leave. This is seen as excessive since the deceased was “only” a distant relative.

“And the people, who leave the reservation and make big money off reservation, get an education in the real world, where you can’t call in or take three days off for this or that, where you don’t get five days paid because your cousin died. In the real world, that doesn’t happen. You may get off for the funeral or you may not. And chances are you aren’t getting paid for that.” - White-Worldologist

But for the longtime reservation resident and tribal employee, this is normal. Time is taken not only for the funeral but also to help other family members with arrangements and other details.

White-Worldologists usually have many ideas for economic and community development on the reservation. They want the reservation to have fast food restaurants, a swimming pool, health club, small factory and other enterprises. They have seen the benefits of economic growth in their old communities and want to see similar growth on the reservation. Sometimes their ideas are unworkable because of lack of funding or lack of infrastructure. Other times their ideas are rejected because other community members do not share their enthusiasm for change. White-Worldologists say change is often rejected out of fear or jealousy from some longtime community members. White-Worldologists say this immutability sometimes irritates them.

Eventually, most White-Worldologists adjust to the norms of the community, or they give up and move back to the non-Indian world. Some continue to fight for change and feel frustrated if changes are not enacted. The most successful ones have been able to use some of their knowledge learned outside to benefit the tribe from within. And more importantly, they have learned to manage their expectations. But the transition can often be difficult for the member and the community. “We should have a decontamination room,” one member jokes.

Newcomers

Newcomers are recent reservation arrivals, but it is almost impossible to put a time frame on their status. Some people are viewed as “Johnny-come-latelys” for years, while others have a much shorter newcomer status time like a few months. Every person has a unique experience based on whether or not they feel welcomed, find employment, and find suitable housing. Because every person is unique, every experience is different and the learning curve for fitting in varies.

But there are generally three factors which influence how long someone will feel like a newcomer. First, if the person was raised on the reservation and is returning to old friends and family, the transition goes faster. A respondent mentioned a man who left the reservation with his parents when he was 14 years old. He returned with a wife and four children when he was 37 years old. She comments this was an “old family going way back”. When it was pointed out that he was actually gone for 23 years, she brushed this aside, “Oh, but he never really left. And besides, all his kin were here, his uncles and whatnot.” This is interesting because this man was only able to visit the reservation one time during those 23 years. By saying ‘he never really left’,

she explains that if you were raised on the reservation, it stays with you. It is a piece of you that never goes away. People who were raised on the reservation often have an easier transition into the reservation because they were once members of that tribal community.

“My boy was gone for forty years. He retired from down there and then came back. He had to go, to find work. I think when you’re born and raised here, a lot of them do come back home.”
- Lifelong Homelander

Second, if a person has a large family on the reservation and she can blend in with them and get involved in their activities, the transition may go more quickly. In the above anecdote, the woman says all of “his uncles and whatnot” are still living on the reservation. Having family members, especially a lot of them, eases the transition. It is made even easier if your family is well-liked and respected. It is hard to be a stranger among relatives, no matter how different you may be.

“I think families have reputations and they precede them and follow them. We locate people by their family relations. When they show up and you locate them, then it’s okay, and sometimes, it’s not okay.”
- Scout

Third, if the person quickly works to become involved in community activities and to become a community member, the local residents may warm up to her presence more quickly. Of course, all of these processes are contingent on the personality of the individual and their own perceptions.

Border residents – Ashland

According to the Bad River enrollment office, 918 members live in Ashland, the town just outside of the reservation. Ashland is a predominantly white town of about 9,000 people. It is located about ten miles from Odanah. There are two subgroups for this location: Reservation Suburbanites, those who think of Ashland as a bedroom community for the reservation; and Sash Wearers, those who live predominantly in the white world but still enjoy a relationship with the tribe and other members.

Reservation Suburbanites

For Reservation Suburbanites, the border town is a convenient housing location if a person wants to stay near the reservation but is unable or unwilling to live on it. In other words, it is the closest thing to being there. Their lives are so strongly connected with the homeland through employment, family or friendships, that they see themselves as members of that homeland community.

Housing and developable land are limited on the reservation. Most housing is designated as low-income and managed by the Housing Authority. Therefore it is not amenable to all members.

“I lived on the reservation for a short period of time but I found that I wasn’t suitable to the public housing structure. I’ve always been independent on a lot of issues and I couldn’t find that comfort living in Odanah.” – Reservation Suburbanite

Reservation Suburbanites treat Ashland like a bedroom community, somewhere they go home to sleep. However, their friends and family most often live on the reservation. The social activities they enjoy take place on the reservation, like hunting or fishing. Many of them work for the tribe so they are traveling to the reservation at least five days a week.

Reservation Suburbanites are knowledgeable about the reservation community and activities. They know many reservation residents, where they live and who is doing what these days. This is the world they really live in. They use words like ‘our’ and ‘we’ when discussing the reservation. They do not see their home in Ashland as anything but a necessity or convenience. For example, one person moved to Ashland because her child was in sports and it is easier to participate in after school activities if you live in Ashland. But she still strongly considers herself a member of the Bad River community.

Also, Reservation Suburbanites are viewed by others, both on and off the reservation, as members of the Bad River community. Because housing is so limited on the reservation, tribal members often must move into Ashland until suitable housing opens on the reservation. It is not viewed negatively by other tribal members, but seen as a necessity.

Sash Wearers

In the mid to late 1800’s mixed-blood Chippewa had a tradition of wearing a red and white sash, indicating their mixed Indian and white blood. At that time, some mixed-bloods were ostracized from one or both of the societies; or they simply chose to join the society they preferred. Other members floated in and out of both communities, utilizing the resources of both.

Today, I use this term to describe members of this Border subgroup. Sash Wearers have a different identity than Reservation Suburbanites. The symbolic, but invisible, red and white sash today signifies they are different by their choice, not quite like the other tribal members. They have not abandoned their tribal identity and assimilated into white society. But they are also removed enough from the reservation so they are not usually directly impacted by what happens there.

Sash Wearers usually choose to live in the border town because they like it better in town for the convenience of trade or school or they prefer a more urban lifestyle. Ashland is their true home and the reservation is their ancestral home. They may have grown up on the homeland and then moved into town as an adult. Or they could be second or third generation emigrants. Others have returned from being raised in the cities and find that living in Ashland is more comfortable than the reservation.

“We love Bad River, it’s a beautiful place. But we’re city people, we like the convenience. She likes to walk to the store and I like to sit out there. We just felt the rez wasn’t for us.”
- Sash Wearer

These subgroup members often have as many or more non-tribal friends in Ashland as they do on the homeland. Although their social lives do not necessarily revolve around homeland based activities or friends, they are not cut off from the reservation entirely. They may go to the casino, visit friends and family, or work for the tribe. But as one Sash Wearer said, “we can survive out here.”

Unlike Reservation Suburbanites, Sash Wearers do not devote a great portion of their time and energy to tribal life and homeland activities. And they generally do not have a strong desire to live on the homeland. However, they like to be near enough to visit friends; access tribal resources like going to the clinic; and occasionally take part in tribal activities, like voting in elections or fishing contests.

Sash Wearers know they are one step removed from that connection but they also know it is only one step. If they want to become more involved, they easily could make that step. Most importantly, Sash Wearers are still recognized by other tribal members as tribal members and their decision to live in Ashland is not judged.

Émigré - Milwaukee

The most densely populated off-reservation site for Bad River members is Southeastern Wisconsin. An estimated 1,100 Bad River tribal members live in the Milwaukee area, Racine/Kenosha, Manitowoc, and Madison. There is no “Little Bad River” in Milwaukee. Tribal members live scattered throughout the city and suburbs. The residential patterns appear to be based on socioeconomic means rather than any tribal or ethnic group affiliation.

Tribal people moved to the cities for many different reasons but the most common are to secure employment and to enjoy a different lifestyle. Some are second or third generation off-reservation residents and have never known daily life on the reservation.

“One of the reasons they (my father’s family) moved to Milwaukee, was to find work. He used to tell me that when they moved to Milwaukee, they were told to keep quiet that they were from the reservation, for obvious reasons...In the early 70’s, I started going up to the reservation to camp, find out, to connect...Part of my plan is to go back there and move up to the rez, to give back to the community.”
- Milwaukee area resident

For the Southeastern Wisconsin resident, the reservation is still reachable in one day’s drive. It is a six-hour drive from Milwaukee, five-hour drive from Madison, and four-hour drive from Green Bay. Some will come up from Milwaukee once a month to get their medical prescriptions filled at no cost. Others come up yearly during the powwow or for tribal elections. Others come up occasionally throughout the year to visit relatives and friends, hunt, fish, gamble or simply re-connect. Some are either unable or choose not to come at all.

Displaced Reservation Residents

Displaced Reservation Residents think of themselves as tribal people who happen to live in the city because it is absolutely necessary for work, school, or family reasons. They have a very strong connection to the tribal community.

“I left the reservation in 1958 and never was a resident ever again, other than visiting and vacations and so forth... I left because there was an opportunity for me to get BIA assistance to go to school. And after schooling, I stayed and I got a job. There were no jobs in Bad River back then. But I still regard Bad River as my home even though I’ve been away from there so long.”
- Displaced Reservation Resident

Displaced Reservation Residents generally do not socialize in pan-Indian clubs or become key players in the urban Indian community. They may attend Indian Summer or another large American Indian event. For the most part, their energies for Indian related activities tend to

focus on tribal events or people, meaning they will drive home for hunting season, ricing season, to gamble at the casino or visit relatives.

These displaced residents make the best of the situation at hand, meaning they befriend urban neighbors and co-workers from many different ethnic backgrounds. They have circles of friends that include many non-Indians. They do not necessarily seek out and target other Indians in the city as their close circle of friends. Instead of creating or seeking out a “Little Bad River” or Indian community in Milwaukee, they go to Bad River when they are homesick for tribal people or their land. Unfortunately for them, because of the distance, they are not able to go to the reservation as often as they would like.

“When we go home, everybody always asks, ‘When you coming back?’ But it’s not a thing where you can just leave here and go back anytime. You’ve got a lot of responsibilities here.”
- Displaced Reservation Resident

A defining component of this group is they would not consider themselves to be well connected to the urban Indian community. They may have Indian friends but these relationships are personally made, not made through urban centers or other formal Indian organizations. When asked if they participate in urban Indian activities, one respondent replies:

“You mean with the Concrete Indians? No thanks.”

– Milwaukee Area Resident

Pan-Indians

Pan-Indianism is a fairly recent phenomenon describing the formation of a unique American Indian ethnic group. American Indian people and others in urban areas come together for fellowship, educational and cultural programs.

The people in this subgroup feel as though they belong primarily to the American Indian ethnic group, but their tribal attachment is still very important to them. Pan-Indians tend to be very involved in American Indian clubs and activities. They are the planners and doers of urban Indian life and can be found in almost every major city, with Milwaukee being no exception. They are the ones who often plan the major urban powwows, belong to American Indian organizations, write columns for national Indian newspapers and organize rallies against Chief Wahoo of the Cleveland Indians. They are the Indian experts who are called upon to give talks about Indians at the local libraries and museums.

Pan-Indians often have little or no contact with their homeland communities. This may be due to physical distance, disenfranchisement, or their busy schedules in the pan-Indian world. However, for them it is important to maintain enrollment with the tribe because it is a key component of their pan-Indian identity. The tribal enrollment card is seen as a legitimizing entrance card to the urban Indian community. They believe it gives them credibility that they would otherwise not have.

“This (tribal id) is what makes me a real Indian.” - Pan-Indian

It is like a movie set, where the pan-Indian community is making an effort to authentically replicate a homeland-based tribal community in the city. However, through this recreation by many tribal people from different tribal cultures, the result is not a replication of home, but instead something completely new. This is the wonder of pan-Indianism. It is like the child of tribal homelands. It has some similarities of its parent but in reality, it is its own entity with its own leaders, social norms, political agenda and group expectations.

“Pan-Indianism is about how to sustain commonalities and bonds. It’s like a prison setting. People clump together for protection. There’s power in numbers; same thing with the urban setting. Young people need that acknowledgement and they turn to pan-Indianism. And I do I think there’s some retribalization going on with that. - White-Worldologist

“I’m more pan-Indian. I identify with being a Bad River Chippewa person but in an academic approach. I’ve been disenfranchised. I would like to go back and reconnect, get to know some people. I talk to (one woman), she’s our only contact.” - Pan-Indian

The above respondent says he does not know much about Bad River except for what he reads in books. He has no direct experience with his tribal homeland nor maintains any relationships with tribal members outside of his pan-Indian circle of friends. Still, he is heavily involved in educating people about tribes and American Indians. He is an urban community recognized expert on the subject. This may be because pan-Indians interviewed in this study tend to be highly educated, and well informed about national Indian issues. They say they utilize their education to further Indian causes.

Pan-Indians have a different foundation of knowledge. Pan-Indianism is not rooted in one particular homeland or culture. Instead it takes bits and pieces of many places and peoples, creating a pan-Indian mosaic. Therefore, activists sometimes thousands of miles away can take on a more significant meaning to Pan-Indians than their own tribal leaders. Pan-Indians often

know the important Indians in America – actors, politicians, activists; that the average reservation resident or border resident does not have access to and most likely does not know personally.

Pan-Indianism appears to be a very effective force in mobilizing people to act on important American Indian issues or to help people maintain an Indian identity. But it has its critics who feel pan-Indians do not fully understand the importance of tribal belonging and tribal sovereignty. They are concerned that a push to create an American Indian ethnic group may counteract their efforts to remain a separate sovereign people. Of all the subgroups, Pan-Indians probably face the most internal criticism.

“That pan-Indian thing, those ceremonies are not ours. They’re taking in little bits and pieces of Sioux, Navajo, New Mexico tribes. And the true meaning of the Ojibwe people is within the context of our ceremonies in which they originally started.” - Reservation Resident

“Pan-Indianism is held together by a common cry of distress and anger, like boycotting something. If this is the best we can do as a people, leave me out. It’s operating an external locus of control, rather than being guided by inside. External forces, like mascots, are guiding them. They discuss things like changing white perceptions instead of changing our own perceptions. We should have an internal locus of control, operate from our own compass and power source. A reservation person doesn’t care about what white people think. They’re confident in their own identity. Pan-Indianism is about how we are seen through white filters. I refuse to see myself through white eyes. It’s internalized oppression.” - Reservation resident

A pan-Indian tribal member says many homeland residents do not fully understand or appreciate the work they do in the cities. “We’re trying to be ambassadors of all tribes, hoping people will go up and see the tribes.”

Two Paddlers

The Chippewa say when a person is living in two worlds, the Indian and the white, they are said to be “standing in two canoes”. When someone has reached this point in her life, it is generally believed she must make a decision to choose one world or risk falling out and losing both. This metaphor is being adjusted to describe this unique subgroup of urban tribal members.

These members are actually in one canoe but using two paddles, one for each side. Their background includes having spent some time, usually their childhood, on the reservation which often gives them more clout in Indian Country. But they have also professionally or personally succeeded in the white world, sometimes receiving higher education off-reservation.

Two Paddlers are accepted group members on the reservation and in urban circles. They hang out with friends and relatives on the homeland frequently and feel comfortable in that

environment. But they also have Indian friends in the city and often serve on urban Indian committees with many pan-Indian group members. They are well connected in both communities and have little trouble going in and out of each community. Part of being who they are is being part of both communities; it defines them. Two Paddlers have very strong connections to the tribal continuum and their place on it. They also have a very good relationship and feeling of belonging in the tribal community.

One respondent says she enjoys being a member of both communities because “I can be me all the time. But what we talk about or do may be different.” She says topics and activities depend on the situation and people surrounding her at the time. When she is on the reservation, they talk about homeland based topics like tribal elections or how the rice was this year. They see each other at the local bar, “have a beer and smoke some cigs together”. Or they stand around and visit at the tribal grocery store or administration building. In the city with urban Indians, she discusses national Indian topics like educating non-Indians about tribes or the impact of Indian gaming nationwide. They meet at committee meetings or a community potluck. Both experiences are very rewarding for the individual so there is a strong desire to maintain relationships with each of these groups.

Distance from the homeland offers them freedom to construct what it means to be Indian. They live in a place, the urban area, which allows them to make these kinds of decisions, to be members of both groups by their own choosing.

Winter Campers

“We’re trying to rekindle the culture for ourselves and rekindle our roots.”

- Winter Camper

Traditionally, Ojibwe did not live in permanent villages. They moved according to the season. Winter was the most difficult season; being long, cold and providing limited opportunities to hunt and forage. To survive, Ojibwe wintered in very small family units in different locations spread out across their territory. Most often it would be a nuclear family with perhaps grandparents or a sibling’s family.

This subgroup is called Winter Campers because the way they live their lives is comparable to this traditional form of survival. In the city, the immediate family remains close, visiting each other frequently. But they are cut off for long stretches of time from other tribal people. They rarely visit the homeland and they do not socialize in pan-Indian circles. They

keep to themselves, hoping that someday something will happen, a thaw will come, and they will find a way to reconnect.

“I wish my Mom would get a place up there; not for her, for us. If she moved up there, do you know how many of us would follow?” - Winter Camper

This is not an assimilated group. They care very deeply about their tribe and identify very strongly as tribal members. However, they just don't know how to make those necessary connections with the tribe or other tribal members to effect change in their situation. They are caught up in managing the business of their daily lives. And because tribal activities or issues are outside their usual daily operations, there is never an opportunity to break camp and reach out.

For example, Winter Campers often read books about their tribe and decorate their homes with American Indian themes. Identifying as a tribal member and keeping those symbols close to them is very important. But more importantly, they want to find a way, an opportunity to enact that identity through more contact with the tribe or other homeland based tribal members.

“I like to see how people are related to me, to make that connection.”

– Winter Camper

“Next time I go up, I'm going to bring a big notebook and I'm going to make a family tree out of it.

- Winter Camper

Conclusion

This research indicates that tribal members are a very diverse group of people with many different life experiences, goals for themselves, expectations of the tribe and needs of the community. It suggests useful ways to conceptualize tribal people as representing many different viewpoints and identities within the tribal membership.

Discussing tribal member identities within the context of their location has revealed some very interesting findings. It helps to explore deeper how tribal members really see themselves and others in relation to their tribal identity. All of the categories describe tribal members' feelings of belonging to the tribe, how others view them and how their life experiences have shaped their identity. It also allows tribal members who live in the border town, an often overlooked population, an opportunity to partake in the discussion.

Reservation residents fall into four general categories. Lifelong Residents have always lived on the reservation. Scouts have lived away from the reservation for a very short period of time and for a limited purpose. White-Worldologists have lived in mainstream American society for a considerable amount of time. Newcomers have also lived in mainstream America for a long time but are recent arrivals to the reservation.

There are two categories of identity for border residents. Reservation Suburbanites view Ashland as a bedroom community for the reservation. It is merely a place to live and they still view themselves as reservation community members. Sash Wearers still identify with being tribal members but their lives are not strongly impacted by happenings on the reservation.

For the Milwaukee area residents, the émigré, there are four categories. Displaced Reservation Residents see themselves as tribal people who live in the city out of complete necessity; otherwise they would be on the reservation. They do not participate in urban Indian events, preferring to go the reservation instead. Pan-Indians are almost the opposite of the previously mentioned group. They usually do not have a relationship with the tribe or homeland residents. Instead, they live in a pan-Indian urban world with its own norms, leaders and customs. Two Paddlers maintain ties with both the homeland community and the urban Indian community. They participate and feel comfortable in both environments. Winter Campers are isolated from both the urban Indian community and the tribal homeland. They desire a relationship with the tribe but are unsure of how to attain that and cannot see any opportunities to avail.

There is a sample limitation with this study because it only included three locations. There are thousands of tribal members who do not live in one of these three locations. However, this research suggests that some of these categories might apply to many of the members scattered across the United States, particularly the Winter Campers. It would be interesting to learn how many tribal members feel as though they have been encamped for years waiting for an opportunity to reestablish a relationship with the tribe. And there is the possibility there might be a need for new categories depending on new data collected.

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