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Identity

by Robert Francis, May 2018

Selu (Say-loo) is the Cherokee word for corn. Selu *is* the corn, and Selu is the Corn Mother. Kanati (Kah-nah-tee) is the Great Hunter. Kanati is of the wolves. These two: Kanati and Selu are the first man and first woman of the Cherokees. Kanati is the embodiment, so to speak, of hunting. It could be said Kanati is also the embodiment of animal husbandry, since originally, according to the story, all the animals were confined and released as needed. Selu is the embodiment of farming, of the raising of grains and vegetables and also of the gathering of herbs. As Cherokees, traditionally, we consider ourselves descendants of these two. Yet, what does that mean? What does it mean to be a child of Kanati and Selu? Does it mean we can trace an unbroken genealogy back to them? Does it mean they are discoverable in our genes?

According to the Cherokee origin epic, as I have heard and understand it, Kanati and Selu had two sons. One of these was from their own bodies. They named this one Home Boy. The other one spontaneously generated from a blood clot that washed downstream from where Kanati was butchering deer by the river. Captured in the canebrakes, this Wild Boy was brought home and became a son by adoption. These two: Home Boy and Wild Boy were, I think, the first two scientists, as they were very curious, always trying to uncover secret knowledge and as often as not misinterpreting what was found.

Wild Boy and Home Boy determined to find out where their father kept all the animals. When they did find out, they let all the animals escape. Wild Boy ran away to avoid possible punishment. But, as the people began to starve, Wild Boy, alone in the mountains, learned to hunt and later returned to teach the people how to hunt.

Wild Boy and Home Boy were curious about how their mother procured the hominy grits she fed them. When they spied out their mother's secret, that the corn came from her own body, they became convinced their mother was a witch and brutally murdered her. But, from their mother's blood spilled out onto the ground, corn grew. The boys taught the people and other peoples as well, how to raise and harvest and make use of the corn.

Kanati spoke to the wolves about killing his two bad boys, but when the wolves came, Home Boy and Wild Boy killed most of *them*. Taking advantage of his bad boys' curious and wayward natures, Kanati tried twice more to send them to their deaths, telling them *not* to go see the terrible water panther that lived at a certain place and telling them *not* to go into the cannibal country, knowing full well the boys could not resist doing what they were told not to do and would have to see for themselves. However, Home Boy and Wild Boy wound up killing the water panther and the cannibals rather than being killed and eaten by them. Finally the whole family was reunited high in the sky dome, in the East. Later, the boys left their parents and went to live in the West, becoming the Thunders. There is no mention, in the story, of Home

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Boy or Wild Boy fathering children. So again I ask: What does it mean to be a child of Kanati and Selu?

Brief Introduction to Chapter 7 May 2018

This extended essay, "Colonized Thinking vs. Indigenous Thinking" was begun early in 2016, with the Introduction and Chapter 1 first presented in February that year. For the next several months, a new chapter was presented every month or so. Then came this chapter, entitled "Identity," which, I think, may be the most critically important chapter in the entire essay. As you are reading this chapter, thinking how long it is, please be mindful that, although it may take an hour to read, it took the better part of two years to write. Even so, much more could be said and is being said on the critical subject of indigenous identity.

To repeat the disclaimer included in the Introduction to the extended essay: Please do not think that I am attempting to speak for all indigenous people in this essay. I am not speaking for all indigenous people any more than I am speaking for all colonized people. I am simply speaking from the perspective of one observer somewhere in the middle. In this, I speak only for myself and with hope that my thinking is more indigenous and less colonized than it was seven, 13, 26 or 52 years ago.

DNA Analysis

One of the varieties of corn we raise at the Daksi Grounds is Cherokee Yellow Dent Corn. We received seed of this variety from Elmer Kingfisher and Richard Moore back in 1996. The stalks of Cherokee Yellow Dent Corn are very tall. The grain comes in various shades of yellow with an occasional red ear. Each kernel of corn has a sharp tooth. I have been told this variety of corn has a very high protein content, perhaps in excess of 20%. We took the word of Elmer Kingfisher and Richard Moore, that this is indeed a Cherokee corn variety, having been raised by Cherokee people for as long as anyone can remember. But, you know, I just had to be sure, so recently I sent the corn in for DNA analysis. After several weeks, I received back a pie chart with the following information: Instead of this being Cherokee Yellow Dent Corn as oral tradition and visual observation had led us to believe, DNA analysis revealed a mixture of

- 61% Johnson Grass
- 27% Sericea Lespedeza
- 9% Multi-Floral Rose and
- 3% Bull Thistle

Wow! Elmer and Richard told me it was corn. It sure looks like corn. But hey, you can't argue with science; you just have to rely on blind faith, right? If a DNA analysis says it's not corn, it must not be corn. Besides that, I payed good money for the test; it has to be valid!

At this point, I hope you realize that I did not *really* submit the Cherokee Yellow Dent Corn for DNA analysis. This is a silly story I made up in order to

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help drive home a more serious point. Actually, I am pretty sure a high quality and well controlled DNA analysis *could* distinguish corn from Johnson Grass. DNA analysis may even be able to identify Cherokee Yellow Dent Corn as an older variety of dent corn. However, I seriously doubt whether DNA analysis could reveal with any certainty whether or not the corn is Cherokee.

I appreciate much of the work of Henry Louis Gates, Jr. I especially like his recent two-part film entitled “Black America Since MLK and Still I Rise”. It is well done and timely; I think everyone should watch it.

When the television series “Who Do You Think You Are?” first began to air on the Public Broadcasting Service or PBS, I was excited about that, as well. Getting to know a bit about the celebrities who agreed to come on the show and watching them find out about their ancestry was entertaining. But then, there were some things about the show that troubled me. What bothered me most was Gates’ disparagement of family oral traditions. Time and again on episodes of “Who Do You Think You Are?” and the related series “Finding Your Roots”, Gates would comment that oral tradition is notoriously inaccurate just before recommending ancestral DNA analysis. Nearly all of the African Americans featured on the shows reported family oral tradition of Native American Indian ancestry. However, as African Americans had their DNA analyzed virtually all were found to have no or very little Native American Indian DNA. From my own study of the history of slavery in the United States, this is simply unbelievable. American Indians were taken into slavery from first contact up until the end of the Civil War and even after the Civil War in California. While many enslaved Indians were shipped out to the Caribbean islands and to Europe, great numbers were incorporated into the slave populations of the South, to the extent that one would expect to find substantial percentages of Native American Indian DNA within post-slavery African American populations (Gallay). One evening, while watching an episode of “Finding Your Roots,” I had an epiphany. I felt like the little boy Ralphie, in the movie “A Christmas Story,” when he decodes his first message using his brand new Little Orphan Annie Decoder Ring. “Be sure to drink your Ovaltine,” the message reads, to which Ralphie replies, “A crummy commercial!” PBS is supposed to be commercial-free, yet these shows: “Who Do You Think You Are?” and “Finding Your Roots” are commercials, really nothing but infomercials for Ancestry.com, the primary purpose of which seems to be persuading people to pay for DNA ancestral analysis.

In recent years, several people from known American Indian families have told me about submitting DNA for ancestral analysis and receiving back results showing very little or even no Native American Indian DNA. In one case, a mother and daughter both submitted DNA to two different companies and received back entirely contradictory results. As I stated in a paper entitled “Identity” written in 2014,

I can’t know for sure, but I suspect that every American Indian person deals with Identity issues. At the back of every mind is the question: “Am I a *real* Indian, or more precisely, am I a real Cherokee, a real Miami, a real Apache, a real Lakota, etc., etc.?”

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The reason for this may be found in hundreds of years of identity attacks orchestrated by colonizing cultures (p. 1).

It is my opinion that those submitting DNA for ancestral analysis are already dealing with identity issues. I think this is true, not just of American Indians but for anyone submitting DNA for ancestral analysis. Far from helpful, the pie-chart results are exacerbating the problems. Deeply troubled by this, I determined to do a bit of research into the accuracy and verity of DNA ancestral analysis.

In the preface of his book, *Genes, Peoples, and Languages*, Luigi Luca Cavalli-Sforza explains,

Genetics is instrumental in shaping us, but so, too, are the cultural, social, and physical environments in which we live. The main genetic differences are between individuals and not between populations, or so-called "races." Differences of genetic origin among the latter are not only small...but also superficial (p. VIII).

In the first chapter of his book, Cavalli-Sforza asserts,

In more recent times, the careful genetic study of hidden variation, unrelated to climate, has confirmed that homogeneous races do not exist. It is not only true that racial purity does not exist in nature: it is entirely unachievable, and would not be desirable (p. 13).

Given that there are greater differences between human individuals than between groups of humans, whether "races" or ethnicities, how can DNA ancestral analysis or genetic mapping for ancestry or ethnicity of individuals have any validity? What do the experts have to say?

In an article entitled "Genetic Ancestry Testing" in the *Sense About Science* web archive, several genetics experts speak out on the subject of genetic or ancestral mapping. Mark Thomas, Professor of Evolutionary Genetics, Department of Genetics, Evolution and Environment, University College London or UCL says, "The idea that we can read our ancestry directly from our genes is absurd" ("Genetic Ancestry Testing").

Steve Jones, Emeritus Professor of Human Genetics, Evolution & Environment, UCL comments, "On a long trudge through history – two parents, four grandparents, and so on – very soon everyone runs out of ancestors and has to share them. As a result, almost every Briton is a descendant of Viking hordes, Roman legions, African migrants, Indian Brahmins, or anyone else they fancy" (Ibid).

Lounes Chikhi, CNRS Senior Scientist (Directeur de Recherche) at the Evolution and Biological Diversity lab, Paul Sabatier University, Toulouse, France remarks, "The interpretation of genetic data is already difficult where geneticists try to reconstruct aspects of our recent evolutionary history, and

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becomes desperately so when we try to do the same for specific individuals. Unfortunately, many claims made by ancestry companies are closer to 'folk genetics' than real population genetics" (Ibid).

Mike Weale, Reader in Statistical Genetics, Department of Medical and Molecular Genetics, Kings College London reflects, "I know it's only a tiny part of my true ancestry, but I would still love to know whether my male line ancestors were Vikings, or Celts, or both, or neither. Or at least be reasonably certain. Same goes for my female line. It's a shame there's no valid way to do that" (Ibid).

Sense About Science Director, Tracey Brown, sums it up by saying, "Genetics researchers are telling us that you are better off digging around in your loft than doing a DNA ancestry test if you want to find out about your family tree. We tend to see DNA tests as providing specific personal information, because of their use in crime detection and medical diagnosis. The genetic ancestry business trades on this" (Ibid).

So, what can you know about your personal ancestors by looking at your DNA? "Not much," says Tabitha Innocent, in her article entitled "Sense About Genetic Ancestry Testing" in the Sense About Science archive. She goes on to say, "Genetic ancestry tests use some techniques that have been developed by researchers for studying differences in DNA across many groups of people. The things we know about genetic ancestry, almost without exception, are about the genetic history of whole populations. Companies use techniques from this field and sell their findings to people who want to find out about their personal history. The techniques were not designed for this. The information they give is not unique to any individual. While there are other, more specific flaws with these testing services, that fundamental point alone means that the very concept of individual genetic ancestry tests is unsound.... The commercial genetic ancestry tests borrow selectively and misleadingly from the research field looking at population genetic ancestry, but they should not be confused with it!" (Innocent).

Tech insider, Kevin Loria writes, "Genes can identify a person and find related people, but there's no genetic meaning of race or even ancestry — just because DNA can say you are related to a large number of people who live in a place doesn't mean you are genetically *from* that place." He goes on to warn, "There's a dark history of using genetics to talk about race. As Adam Rutherford (a former geneticist and now a writer) points out at The Guardian, one of the pioneers of the study of human genetics, Francis Galton, was also one of the creators of the eugenics movement. But since then, the study of genetics has exposed exactly why "race" is not a biological concept....from a biological standpoint, we're 99.9% the same" (Loria).

Calling DNA ancestry tests "meaningless", Ashik Siddique explains, "People's genetics do not reflect specific groups, since the high degree of genetic mixing over centuries means that even cultures with strong cultural boundaries do not have noticeable genetic differences.... By analyzing the DNA variation among many individuals from different regions, scientists can test possible population history models and calculate how likely

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they are to explain specific DNA patterns. This can tell us about populations of people, but not much about individual genealogy” (Siddique).

Speaking of companies offering DNA admixture tests to individuals, resulting in pie charts of a person’s ancestry, Alva Noe writes, “But there are problems with tests of this kind. First, there is no complete database of the world’s DNA. Data have been collected for different purposes, and different companies have access to different data bases. This is why different companies may give you different results.” Noe goes on to explain, “DNA is just not going to carve up groups at their culturally significant ‘ethnic’ joints.... The question is, can it ever be more than fantasy to try to draw meaningful conclusions about an individual’s origins on the basis of the sort of DNA information that is available to us now? The answer, I think, is a qualified negative.... The truth is, you have your history and your genes have theirs. There is a very large class of different possible human histories that could have produced in you just the genetic code that you have. And, at the same time, there is a very large class of different genomes that you might now have as a result of a single, actual history of your relatives. The bottom line: You can’t read off your identity from your genetic code” (Noe).

Putting it all together, DNA analysis may be useful for ascertaining physical paternity, if that is considered important. DNA analysis may be used to establish links with direct male-line or female-line ancestors, so long as they are not too many generations removed and assuming an uncontaminated sample of their own DNA is available. It may be used to prove or disprove sibling or cousin relationship within a certain probability. It may also be useful in identifying an individual as the perpetrator of a crime, although it should be remembered that DNA analysis is no more infallible as a forensic tool than fingerprinting, and fingerprinting is not nearly as reliable as most people think (Mnookin). DNA analysis is also legitimately used to suggest or confirm migration patterns of large groups of people. However, when misused to map the ethnic ancestry of individuals, DNA analysis is not only worthless but psychically and spiritually harmful and culturally destructive.

Individual genetic ancestral or ethnic mapping is marketing, not science. Furthermore, it is unethical marketing—a scam or fraud, as companies are offering a service they cannot actually provide. Yet there seems to be something more underhanded going on that just a simple marketing scam. To begin with, companies offering DNA ethnic mapping: Ancestry.com, 23andMe, National Geographic and others are focusing on supposed differences in DNA between “racial” and ethnic groups. This is reminiscent of the racist pseudo-science of phrenology so popular in the 19th Century and also of the Eugenics movement of the early 20th Century. In actuality, there are no clear-cut physical or genetic differences between so-called “races” or ethnicities, with all humans being 99.9% genetically the same. So, I will go ahead and say it: Individual DNA ethnic mapping is racist practice. And, more than that, as it pertains to American Indian peoples and probably to many other indigenous peoples around the Earth, DNA ethnic mapping is a new weapon of genocide, as it is being used to minimize, overshadow and fragment indigenous identities. Whether this is intentional or without intent

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and thought, the effect is the same. I would think a man such as Henry Louis Gates, Jr. would be intelligent enough to know this. Companies offering individual DNA ancestral or ethnic mapping services along with those promoting these services or disservices, such as Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Are without excuse.

There is one more thing that has puzzled me concerning DNA ethnic mapping. While the processing of a DNA rape kit will cost from \$1,000 to \$1,500, DNA ethnic mapping is much more cheaply priced. Recently, at least one company has dropped their price to below \$60. What sort of real laboratory work can be performed for that amount of money? It seems to me that if these companies are doing anything at all with the DNA samples coming in, they are not making money from the low prices charged for the kits. So, what is the real motivation? How are these companies making money? According to Charles Seife, the real goal is the hoarding of this most personal of all data, with DNA mapping acting merely as a mechanism or front “for a massive information-gathering operation against an unwitting public” (Seife). What is being done with this data? What will be done with this data? It would seem these companies have discovered a whole new world to colonize.

Science is objective. However, when science joins itself with religion, politics, big business or simply with money, it ceases to be objective and becomes subjective. In short, it ceases to be science and becomes, instead, just another tool of colonization.

Colonized Thinking about Identity

Colonizing nation-states have a goal of homogenization and separation, a defining of the categories of “us” and “them” which includes separation from and destruction or minimization of real tribal and ethnic identities and the building of a unified identity or fictional ethnicity based on nation-state citizenship. The first step in the process of building nation-state identity is a stated focus on the individual and individual rights while militantly denying indigenous group autonomy. However, individual rights are also, in fact, denied by the nation-state through ever-present pressure to conform to the standard, homogenized, colonized, model of citizenship.

A colonized person will usually think of himself or herself in terms of a nationalist or nation-state citizenship identity along with multiple sub-identities: “racial,” religious, political and economic (how one earns money). Sub-identities are seen as non-threatening to the colonizing nation-state so long as they remain subservient to the nation-state citizenship identity. As with everything else, the colonized mind thinks of identity as something to be claimed or owned. Although the colonized mind may allow for indigenous tribal identity to be included among multiple sub-identities, it is important to note that colonized thinking treats indigenous tribal identity in an entirely different manner. For instance, one is not part American or part Christian or part Republican or part Certified Public Accountant. But, when an indigenous identity is encountered, the colonized mind immediately queries “How much?”

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To the colonized mind or in the mind of the colonizers, indigenous identity may be admired so long as it is in the past. However, indigenous identity in the present is feared, loathed, despised and hated by the colonized/colonizing mind, existing only to be utterly destroyed or fully subjugated and controlled. And so, we had Columbus and his cohorts hacking men, women and children to pieces with their swords. We had rangers, militiamen and regular army waging wars of extermination. Today we have state and federal recognition granted to some tribes or factions of tribes, a practice my son Nvyha has pointed out as having the same motive as J.R.R. Tolkien's dark lord handing out rings of power, binding tribes in subservience to non-indigenous forms of governance with racist blood-quantum based citizenship or tribal identity. And, we have all those people asking, "How much Indian are you?"

Indigenous identity, when acknowledged at all, is seen as secondary to and subservient to one's identity as a citizen of the nation-state. There is a deliberate tendency to fragment and thereby destroy indigenous identity through use of such terms as "part Indian," the derogatory "half-breed" or even the seemingly innocuous "mixed-blood." Those not of the colonized and colonizing in-group and especially indigenous people in resistance to colonization or in the process of decolonization and re-indigenation, are willfully misunderstood through projected stereotypes having little, if any, basis in reality. Such stereotyped projections, when internalized, adversely affect even the self-images and therefore the identities of indigenous people.

Many European Americans and not a few American Indians are of the opinion that one must be a "full-blood" member of a tribe, generally of a federally recognized tribe, in order to be a "real Indian". This idea comes from the fiction or pretense that indigenous tribes until very recent times were isolated and closed societies. George Bird Grinnell, in his book *The Fighting Cheyennes*, explodes this concocted myth. Grinnell writes, "Partly as a result of long association with the village tribes of the Missouri—Rees, Mandans, and Hidatsa—the Cheyennes have among them a strong infusion of foreign blood. A still greater mingling of alien blood comes as a result of their warlike character—so pronounced during many years of the last century—which resulted in capture from their enemies of great numbers of children of both sexes who in due course were adopted into the tribe, grew up as Cheyennes, and married and reared children. Old Cheyennes have told me that it is difficult to find any Cheyenne without a strain of foreign blood, and as I think over my acquaintances I can recall hardly any whose ancestry can be traced back wholly in the Cheyenne tribe (p. 4). What Grinnell recorded of the Cheyennes is true of every tribe, every people who has ever lived in the Earth. However, no indigenous tribe ever divided their people into "full-bloods" and "mixed-bloods," not until the colonizers taught them to do so.

In her afterward to Anahareo's *Devil in Deerskins*, Sophie McCall describes how "colonial control of Indigenous identity... creates the ironic but widespread situation in which White people 'playing Indian' are read as more convincingly 'Indian' than Indigenous people themselves (p. 191). She goes on to write, "Ironically, before the exposure of Grey Owl's family background (Archie Belaney, a.k.a. Grey Owl, was born and raised English, in England but later, living in and writing from the Canadian wilderness, claimed to be half

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Apache and half “Scotch” from Mexico.), it was Anahareo who was perhaps made to feel un-Indian because of her diasporic Indigenous history (Anahareo’s people were federally unrecognized or non-status Indians.), and it was Grey Owl who increasingly owned a sense of ‘Indianness’” (Ibid p. 203).

No matter what they call us
 However they attack
 No matter where they take us
 We’ll find our own way back

- From “No Matter What” by
 Andrew Lloyd Webber and
 Jim Steinman

Indigenous Thinking about Identity

An indigenous-thinking person sees himself or herself, first and last, as one of the People, a member of ones extended family or clan, a member of ones tribe, an integral and interrelated part of the Earth and of the Universe. The strength and ability of the group to survive depends on understanding and embracing relatedness and community. Indigenous terms of identity such as the Cherokee words *anijalagi* (ah-nee-jah-lah-ghee) and *aniyvwiya* (ah-nee-yuh-wee-yah) are actually verb phrases rather than nouns. Therefore, indigenous identity is not something that may be claimed or owned but rather something lived out in continuous, relational action. Although most English speakers seem to have forgotten it, even the English term “human being” is a verb phrase, not a noun.

To be whole, identity cannot be fragmented. In other words, healthy identity does not come in parts. To be one of a clan is to be entirely one of a clan. To be one of a tribe is to be entirely one of a tribe. The responsibility and purview of recognition of clan and tribal identities lies solely with the clans and tribes. To relegate recognition of clan or tribal identities to those outside the clans or tribes, especially to the very nation-states that have worked diligently for centuries to colonize and obliterate all indigenous clans and tribes, is colonized thinking at its most extreme; this is insanity. So, as indigenous thinking would have it, there is identification with that which is bigger than self: The People, the Earth, the Universe, etc. which becomes then the bigger self. Yet, even if the focus of indigenous identity is not the individual self, more individual freedom is allowed and celebrated in indigenous community than is willingly tolerated by colonizing nation-states.

In her novel *Celia’s Song*, Sto:lo tribal member Lee Maracle writes, “*The people have no idea who they are anymore. They are sad, hurt, angry and disconnected; some of them have gone crazy and are busy tormenting each other, not all of them but enough of them. The ones who are trying to figure out how to heal have little of their original knowledge to work with; they are barely succeeding*” (p. 44).

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Young Ones Listen

Young ones listen
Remember who we are
Remember where we are
Do not take the word of America

Listen to them as in caution
Live among them as in surrounded
Live not as they live
Live to appreciate

Seconds ago in eternity
Ancient ones decided
Way before wounded spirits
Dreams shattered under aggression

Earth is mother we are children
The protection is our innocence
Seconds ago it was decided
We are the middle of forever

Look for your medicine
There is a white world gone mad
Thinking protection is in force
Greed the machine preys on them
But they will not admit it
Or do anything about it

They have no medicine
With backs turned
On children and elders
They do not even care for
Air or water or land or life

Too confused to care
Is no way to live
Young ones listen
Remember who you are
Remember where you are
Remember why you are

- John Trudell
in *Lines from a Mined Mind*

“There’s a world of difference between being Indian and claiming Indian ancestry, which many Americans can truthfully do....” writes Evelina Zuni Lucero in her novel *Night Sky, Morning Star*. She goes on to say, “You can’t be Indian in the past tense. Being Indian is like being pregnant.... You can’t

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be a little bit pregnant, part pregnant, pregnant because your grandma once was. You either are or you aren't" (p. 210).

The so-called "Red-Stick" movement among the Muskogee people in the early 1800s was connected to the cultural revitalization movement begun by Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh among the Shawnees and was also related to the Chickamauga Cherokee resistance begun in 1775. As stated by Jack Weatherford, in his book *Indian Givers*, the Muskogee Creek "revitalization movement emphasized cultural purity and adherence to a way of life but had nothing to do with blood lines, race, or genes. They freely admitted both whites and blacks who wanted to join them" (p. 157).

According to Leanne Simpson, in her Nishnaabeg language, "the word e-yaa'oyaanh ... means who I am, the way I am living or becoming, my identity" (p. 13). She goes on to say, "In order to have a positive identity we have to be living in ways that illuminate that identity, and that propel us towards mino bimaadiziwin, the good life" (Ibid).

Speaking of the time before colonizers took control of and began interfering with much of indigenous identity, Leanne Simpson writes, "People wishing to immigrate into our nation were granted full citizenship responsibilities, as long as they were willing to live as Nishnaabeg. While our ways did not require them to give up their (prior) identity, the expression of that identity was modulated within the web of mino bimaadiziwin (the good life of the Nishnaabeg). This is also where our customary adoption practices come from—children were and are readily adopted into our communities and raised as Nishnaabeg citizens when individual families choose to extend nurturing relationships to them. They are able to carry this citizenship and the responsibility embedded within that citizenship through their adult lives if they so choose. This approach is strikingly different from both imposed band membership codes based on arbitrary colonial rules for 'status,' or blood quantum approaches and self-identification. In a sense, it is based on the self-determination of individual families to decide who their family members are; it is an individual choice in terms of maintaining those responsibilities *and* local community acceptance" (Ibid 90).

In his book *Wasase*, Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred includes a conversation with David Dennis who was instrumental in the formation of the Native Youth Movement in British Columbia. David Dennis says, "The old people talk about 'finding your way' - every man, woman, and child has a way for them. It's up to each person to find it, but once they've determined what their way is, nothing can change it" (p. 93). This too is indigenous identity.

Taiaiake Alfred asks the question, "What is being Onkwehonwe (indigenous or aniyvwiya)?" and responds, "From what I've been told, and from what I've seen in all the time I've spent among Onkwehonwe (indigenous people) all over the world, 'being Onkwehonwe' is living heritage, being part of a tradition—shared stories, beliefs, ways of thinking, ways of moving about in the world, lived experiences—that generates identities which, while ever-changing and diverse, are deeply rooted in the common ground of our

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heritages as original peoples.... I am drawn to the idea of indigeneity as practice" (Ibid 139).

"There is an Onkwehonwe identity" Taiaiake Alfred continues. "It is one layer of identification among the multiplicity of layers that form people's sense of self—from the individual, to the family, to the clan, village, nation, and then on to our participation as Onkwehonwe.... that links us to other indigenous peoples in other parts of the world who share our thoughts, feelings, and plans of action" (Ibid 140). This is why Chickamauga Cherokee people can watch, enjoy and to a great extent identify with an Inuit movie from the far North or with an Australian Aboriginal poem or with a Maori television show from New Zealand. We do not have interchangeable cultures, nor is there such a thing as a pan-indigenous or even a pan-Indian culture. However, we do share commonality as indigenous peoples, connected with our various lands and together as peoples through our own indigenous languages, oral traditions, ceremonies and agricultural heritages, having our various histories and shared experiences of holding our cultures and our peoples together or even pulling ourselves back together despite horrendous colonizing pressures to give up, given in and die.

Real vs. Pretentious

The favored Chickamauga Cherokee term of self designation in our own jalagi language is aniyvwiya. The word is often translated as "Real People," but could also be translated as "Common People" or "Plain People". I think "Real People is a good translation so long as it is understood in the sense of "Unpretentious People". An even better translation would be "They are Being Real or Unpretentious People." There came a time when the word or, more precisely, the verb phrase "aniyvwiya" was extended, first by Chickamauga Cherokees and later by other Cherokees to include all Indian people. This is really our best jalagi word for indigenous people. An indigenous people is a real or unpretentious people, a people understanding and maintaining a life-giving, reciprocal, non-exploitative relationship with the land

In the Johnson v. McIntosh ruling of 1823, Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court John Marshall acknowledged that the indigenous peoples of the lands that have come to be called the "Americas" were never actually conquered, but a pretense of conquest was made by saying that "discovery" by a Christian country counts as conquest. Chief Justice Marshall wrote, "However extravagant the pretension of converting the discovery of an inhabited country may appear; if the principle has been asserted in the first instance, and afterwards sustained; if a country has been acquired and held under it; if the property of the great mass of the community originates in it, it [that principle] becomes the law of the land, and cannot be questioned" (Newcomb. Pagans p. 100). This is a great admission, that the United States acquired the land it holds under pretense and that the law of the land in the United States of America is based in pretense!

At the outbreak of war, the ancient Romans declared their enemies to be non-persons and their enemies' lands to be nullius or nobody's property, free for the taking (Ibid p. 105). The Papal Bulls from which sprang the

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Doctrine of Christian Discovery basically applied the ancient Roman pretense of enemies being non-persons and enemies' lands being *terre nullius* to all non-Christian peoples and to any and all lands not claimed by Christian monarchs. In truth, every imperialistic / colonizing nation state is a pretentious people, a people pretending to have some innate or God-given right to steal and exploit lands and to kill and/or enslave or otherwise exert control over or devour the indigenous peoples of the lands they colonize. To recap—an indigenous people is, by definition, a real or unpretentious people; an imperialistic / colonizing people is, by definition, a pretentious people.

Somewhere my soul keeps calling
 Days wearing away day after day
 Accepting what I know I shouldn't
 Believing in what I couldn't
 Tricking myself with nothing to say
 This isn't my life I'm living
 Somewhere my soul keeps calling

- John Trudell from "Isn't My Life"
 In *Lines from a Mined Mind*

"Race"

Biologically, "race" does not exist. "Race" is a European construct or pretense. Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island or what would come to be called the Americas had no such concept before European colonizers arrived, and it took generations of colonization for the idea of "race" to be internalized. Even so, the idea of "race" does now exist, and this idea of "race" does not go away through being ignored or denied or simply not spoken of openly. Certainly, in this colonized world, "race" matters.

The idea of "race" was invented solely for the purpose of racism or the maintenance of racist social structures where some are pushed down in order to supposedly lift others up. The idea of "race" is the basis of the American caste system. White, Black, Hispanic, Indian: In reality these are castes, or we could call them racial castes or racist castes. The idea of "race" causes colonized people to think about identity in a different way. With the insertion or internalization of the idea of "race", identity becomes merely a factor of appearance and biological ancestry.

From the time of the first European invasions of what are now called the Americas and right up to the present time, colonization was and is driven by companies and corporations. Even if religious clergy and politicians were and are there giving pretended justification or legality, it was and is always these companies and corporate groups of exploiters who are the driving force behind colonization. These were and are people infected with cannibal sickness. I don't mean necessarily that they literally consume human flesh, although that did and does happen from time to time, as at Jamestown (Rodriguez). But, in the larger sense, these were and are those who have a mental illness which causes them to feel superior and therefore entitled to consume the lives of other human beings in order to have or to control more

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than they need, in other words, to be rich or wealthy. It is said of Benjamin Franklin that, as a young man, upon seeing the belly of a fish cut open and several little fish fall out, he took this as a parable for human interaction, that the powerful in society devour those who are weaker (Isenberg p. 75). Colonization is the way that empires or Earth cancers expand their territory or metastasize. Another level to the meaning of the word "colonization" may be uncovered by recognizing that the root word "colon" refers to the large intestine of a digestive tract. Therefore, colonization may also rightly be understood as the process of eating and digesting the Earth and the peoples of the Earth. Colonization is, at base, cannibalism (Newcomb. Pagans p. 15). It is said that Tecumseh saw the United States as a great serpent or uktin trying to swallow everything (Ibid p. 134).

Many, maybe even most Europeans who immigrated to the Americas came as slaves. They were called, "indentured servants," since they were not to be enslaved indefinitely, but they were slaves. Some were transported as convicts, others were simply captured on the streets or literally sold by their parents or other family members, often to ease crippling burdens of indebtedness. To the wealthy classes of Europe, these poor, enslavable people were considered "human waste" (Isenberg p. 1). European colonies often employed one or another tribe of indigenous people as border guards to keep other tribes from raiding or attacking and to keep the European indentured servants from escaping to assimilate with indigenous tribes. Indian border guards sometimes also acted as slavers, capturing members of other tribes and selling them to European colonizers. Indian slaving continued even as millions of Africans were transported across the Atlantic to a life of slavery in the Americas (Gallay). All these different groups, the racial or racist castes invented and proscribed by the rich European and European-American colonizers: the poor whites, Indians and African Americans were taught by the rich colonizers to fear and despise one another. Divide and conquer is the strategy which has enabled the rich white cannibals to maintain control. What they feared then, and what they fear even today is for Indians, African Americans and other non-white groups as well as poor whites to come together, for should this ever happen, it will bring the whole colonized, cannibalistic system crashing down.

No group learned the vile and misleading lessons of racism better than the poor whites. Poor whites were used to exterminate Indians. They were proudly called "pioneers" when going out to open the frontier, but survivors attempting to stay on land directly robbed from Indian tribes were later derisively called "squatters" or "crackers" by the rich white men who, in turn, stole the land from them (Isenberg pp. 107-108). Poor whites were also used to control African Americans by working as overseers and forming up patrols to harass slaves. Following the Civil War, poor whites could be counted on to participate in lynch mobs and race riots for the purpose of re-enslaving or keeping African American people in subservient positions. And so, even today.... "Poor whites are still taught to hate—but not to hate those who are keeping them in line. Lyndon Johnson knew this when he quipped, 'If you can convince the lowest white man he's better than the best colored man, he won't notice you're picking his pocket. Hell, give him somebody to look down on, and he'll empty his pockets for you'" (Ibid p. 315). One thing poor whites

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have never seemed to understand, maybe never wanted to understand, is that rich white people have never really considered poor whites to be white at all.

According to the infamous Dred Scott Decision of 1857 as penned by Supreme Court Chief Justice Roger B. Taney, it is “only the free white children of the founding generation [who are] heirs to the original agreement; only pedigree [determines who inherits] American citizenship and whose racial lineage [warrants] entitlement and the designation ‘freeman’” (Ibid p. 153). And, of that “founding generation,” only those white men with a minimum “freehold of twenty-five acres of cultivated land were awarded the right to vote” (Ibid p. 89). From this, I have put together a formula for determining “white blood-quantum.”

To Determine White Blood-Quantum

1. Trace all lines of ancestry back to 1776.
2. Determine what percentage of ancestry in 1776 is verifiably from white men living in one of the original 13 United States, each owning a minimum of 25 cultivated acres outright, or from white women married to white men living in one of the original 13 United States owning a minimum of 25 acres outright.
3. For instance, if a person had 256 ancestors living in 1776, and of those, 24 met the requirements above, that person's white blood-quantum would be 3/32nds white.
4. If any African American ancestry is in evidence, due to the One-Drop-of-Blood Rule, white blood-quantum reduces to 0.
5. If any American Indian ancestry is in evidence, due to the One-Drop-of-Blood Rule, white blood-quantum reduces to 0. (In states that adopted the 1/16 Indian-blood exception to accommodate rich white people claiming descent from Pocahontas, 1/16 Indian blood is allowed, so long as the person is not actually a member of an Indian tribe, band or group.)

To readers who are members of American Indian tribes: The next time a white person asks, “How much Indian are you?” ask that person, “How much white are you?” and offer to calculate their white blood-quantum. Chances are, they won't like it, because, somewhere inside they know that a person can't be just part white and still be white. Also, a person can't be white and something else, because being “white” is not about who or what a person is; it's about what a person is not. “White” is the lack of color, the absence of color. It's not an identity at all, no matter how much people have taken it to be; white is the lack of identity, the ultimate colonized state of colorless existence.

Pretentious as it is, “Race” continues to exist as a deeply ingrained idea. Systemic institutional racism also continues to exist. It is sort of like global warming; denying its existence will not make it go away. Also, all racism is white racism, in practice to ensure white privilege. Anyone hearing otherwise

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needs to be aware they are listening to the voice of white supremacy fearful of losing its place at the top of the racist caste pyramid.

Choose Carefully

Published in 1976, Alex Haley's book *Roots*, along with the television min-series derived from it, caused a media sensation and gave rise to a genealogy fad that did not let up even when the book was proven to be fiction. And, the genealogy fad begun by *Roots* has yet to abate (Isenberg 272).

Through genealogical research, people find out all sorts of things. The same person may have, in his or her ancestry, real people and pretentious people. An African American may have ancestors who were slave-holders. An American Indian person may have ancestors who were rangers or militiamen, horrible genocides. Even some Indian ancestors may have been so colonized as to have willingly helped with the destruction of their own or other indigenous peoples. Can any one person identify equally with all his or her ancestors? It may not be possible to pick and choose ones ancestors, but unless one carefully chooses which ancestors with which to identify, genealogical research will lead only to increased identity fragmentation and confusion. How to choose? Consider these questions posed by my son, Nvya: "Who uplifts you? Who carries you in your walk, in the way you choose to live? These are your real ancestors. Who have left imprints in you that hinder your decolonization or place barriers in the path you choose to walk as an indigenous person? These are strangers to you, as you are to them." Nvya suggests we should also ask ourselves, "Would this ancestor invite me into his or her home, as I am, to share a meal, as I am. If the answer is 'yes,' this is a real ancestor; if the answer is 'no,' this is a stranger."

We do not own our ancestors. By the same token, our ancestors do not own us. We may choose those with whom we will identify more or less closely or not at all. At the annual Bounding Bush Ceremony, we traditional Chickamauga Cherokees invite our blessed departed, those who have gone into the West before us, those who have completed the journey, to come back and feast with us. These strangers who have been described are *not* our blessed departed; they are good riddance! They have not completed the journey to the blessed West. They are drifting somewhere in the Great River.

Of course, in the old days, and even today for traditional indigenous tribal people, ones clan *is* ones genealogy, the genealogy that matters most.

We who are living in the Earth now are also ancestors to those coming into the Earth and to subsequent generations. Those of us calling ourselves "indigenous," those of us seeking or actively engaging in decolonization and a return to an indigenous path would do well to ask ourselves, "What sort of ancestor am I being? Am I an ancestor who may be looked upon as an example for living an indigenous life in the midst of and in resistance to colonizing imperialism, or will I be seen by my descendants as an accomodationist, as one who gave in or surrendered and joined the other side, like a White-Man-Runs-Him riding with Custer, like a Tonto guiding the Lone Ranger or like The Last of the Mohicans, so to speak. Will I be seen by my descendants as truly one of the real people or as one who complied with

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the demands of the colonizers, aiding and abetting, Indian only in the sense of a quaint, sub-category of existence with no true, indigenous tribal identity, divided, fragmented, split in many directions, attempting to walk multiple, contradictory paths? Will I be as a stranger to my indigenous descendants or will they see me as one who upholds and carries them in their path?"

Conclusion

Ultimately, indigenous identity is found in relationships, and relationships are revealed in action. This is not to negate the importance or power of feeling. A person may say, "I am Cherokee in my heart." To this I may reply, "That's good; what are you doing with that?" True feeling will surface in action unless prevented, stunted or paralyzed by fear. However, when feeling becomes intense enough, it will overcome fear, even the paralyzing fear of the colonizers' "hell fire".

Identity grounds and connects, intertwines a person with a people, at the same time, providing a place, a home, from which to exercise harmonious relationships with all peoples, with the Earth in all her aspects, with all that is, even with the entirety of Creation/Creator.

But identity and the relationships in which identity is found are always proven in action. Who do you feel most at home with or among? Who do you choose to be with? What do you do and how do you do it? How do you think and live, not just on weekends or once a month but day by day, every day? How are you recognized by others? When you truly recognize yourself in a certain way or within a certain identity, that identity will be evident in your actions. Others will see it. In other words, if you truly recognize yourself as a tribal Indian, your white friends will not be oblivious to it. They will recognize you as a member of your tribe too.

Chickamauga Cherokee people and especially those who gather for ceremonies at the Daksi Grounds or Daksi Gatiyo know the story of Daksi (Terrapin) and the Wolves. Thrown by angry wolves off a bluff at a shallow point where the waters of a river flowed across a solid rock outcropping, Daksi lay broken and bleeding, his shell shattered into fragments, his blood flowing out and mixing with the waters of the river. But, in spite of great pain, Daksi pulled himself out of the river and sang himself together. And so, Daksi walked away that day, much smaller and humbler than he had been before, always bearing the scars, but still Daksi.

Today, an alternate ending to the Daksi story presents itself. Imagine that as Daksi lay bleeding on the bank of the river, attempting to sing the fragmented pieces of himself together, three well meaning people came strolling along. Seeing Daksi lying there, these three gathered around. "What a mess," they said. "We must do something to help."

The first of the three had some fish parts. "There is no healing or wholeness apart from the fish," this one said. This one added fish parts to Daksi as he lay there fragmented and bleeding, so that Daksi might be healed and whole.

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The second of the three had some peacock parts. "The most beautiful bird from the wisest of lands," this one said. And this one added peacock parts to Daksi, so he could be both wise and beautiful.

The third one had some coyote parts. "Coyote is from out west," this one said. "I think that makes coyote more authentic, and I am sure that makes coyote more romantic." This one added coyote parts to Daksi to make him more romantic and authentic.

By now, maybe you are wondering whether Daksi walked away that day or swam away or flew away or ran away. Well, Daksi didn't walk away that day, and Daksi didn't swim away or fly away or walk away.... Daksi died that day. The three people each shed a tear, then shrugging their shoulders, they walked off to help someone else.

Our people are fractured and shattered, fragmented, plagued with identity confusion and feelings of cultural inferiority following centuries of oppression and attempted genocide. Some cling to religions or elements of religions or cultures from the Middle East or the Far East or even from other American Indian tribes to which they have no real connection. Some attempt to mend fragmented identities with DNA analysis. Others think an endless study of genealogy is the way to heal. Ultimately, most wind up more fragmented in their identities than they were before. Attempting to identify with everyone who may or may not have been in their past, they wind up with no identity at all. Maybe, if we are intent on finding what was lost or bringing together what has been smashed and fragmented, maybe we will do well to go back to the beginning, to take another look at the story of Kanati and Selu.

So, what does it mean to be a child of Kanati and Selu? As for me, It means being Cherokee, being jalagi. It means being a recognized member of one of the seven clans. Recognized by whom? Recognized by the members of my clan who know me as an active and integral part of the extended family. For me, being a child of Kanati and Selu means hunting deer in a respectful way, being in relationship with the deer and all the other animals, wild and domestic, who give themselves that the people may live. It means raising and eating selu ale tuya ale squasi (corn, beans and squash) along with other Cherokee crops, not planting denatured hybrids from some colonizing seed company but maintaining relationships with Cherokee heritage varieties that have fed our people for thousands of years. Being a child of Kanati and Selu means doing my part to keep the jalagi language alive. It means studying and incorporating the language of our people into everyday conversation, learning and helping others to learn, even if not fluent, working toward greater understanding and use of the language and in the direction of a return to fluency that will someday be realized by all the people. Being a child of Kanati and Selu means holding the clan stories, tribal stories and family stories, deep in my heart, so that this oral tradition of our people informs and shapes the way I think and all I do or say. It means knowing and sharing these stories with our people, with our young ones, keeping the oral tradition alive, knowing that these are not just stories of long ago; these stories are about us, right now. Being a child of Kanati and Selu means coming together with my clan and all the seven clans around the ajila galvquodiyu, the Sacred Fire of the anijalagi. As I have been taught, the deep meaning of the word

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anijalagi is “People of the Red Fire” or more precisely, “They are Being the People of the Red Fire.” So long as we keep this Fire and the attendant ceremonies, we are a people; we are anijalagi; we are children of Kanati and Selu, a real people, aniyvwiya, in the Earth. Being a child of Kanati and Selu means gadugi, working together in cooperation with all the people and all our relatives, all our relations, the two-leggeds the four-leggeds, the wingeds, the many-leggeds, the no-leggeds, the standing ones, the long people, the Earth in all her aspects, the Sky above, the Sun, the Moon, the planets, the stars. Being a child of Kanati and Selu means taking my functional place in the great Universe, the Multiverse, continuing to be real, unpretentious, even if the Earth is infected with the cancer of imperialistic colonization.

Being a child of Kanati and Selu is not something that may be found through DNA analysis, nor is it found through genealogical research. It is not something that comes in parts, fragments or blood quantum. Being a child of Kanati and Selu is all or nothing. Being a child of Kanati and Selu is being who I am, being jalagi, one of the real people, the aniyvwiya.