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- Dia-logical:** based on the non-duality between *mythos* and *logos*, *theoria* and *praxis*, science and wisdom, wisdom and love. "Wisdom emerges when the love of knowledge and the knowledge of love coalesce" (Raimon Panikkar.)

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# INTER culture

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## THE MOHAWK NATION

### Chapter 4

#### ITS SEVEN COMMUNITIES. A BRIEF HISTORY.

by

Robert VACHON

25th Anniversary  
1968-1993

INTERCULTURAL INSTITUTE OF MONTREAL

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- ❖ to identify and facilitate communication among institutionally-affiliated and independent scholars, from all disciplines and cultures, who explore alternatives to the contemporary social crisis

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**Chapter IV**

**THE MOHAWK NATION**

**Its Seven Communities. A Brief History**

*by*

**Robert VACHON**

**Table of contents**

Introduction .....	2
1. The Community of Kahnawake .....	4
2. The Community of Kanesatake.....	10
3. The Community of Akwesasne.....	21
4. The Community of Ohswekan (Grand River).....	27
5. The Community of Tyendinaga .....	30
6. The Community of Watha.....	32
7. The Community of Ganienkeh .....	36
War, Warriors and the Dynamics of Peace.....	40

## THE MOHAWK NATION Its Seven Communities. A Brief History

by  
Robert VACHON

### INTRODUCTION

There are today seven Mohawk communities or village settlements, founded at various times: Kahnawake (1667), Kanesatake (1721), Akwesasne (1747), Ohswekan (1783), Tyendinaga (1784), Watha (1881), and Ganienkeh (1974).<sup>1</sup>

The European settlers saw these communities — especially the older ones — as "Indian Missions," "reductions," and eventually "reservations." They referred to their inhabitants as "domiciliated Indians," "praying Indians," "Christian Indians," or "Indian bands."

The Iroquois and Mohawks, however, saw and today still see these as "Mohawk" or rather Kanienke:haka communities and villages. They see themselves primarily as Kanienke:haka (people of the land of Flint) and Haudenosaunee (people of the Longhouse), whether they are Christian or not, part of a Band Council or part of a Longhouse.

For the French and English, they came to these places as subjects of the King, on Crown land, on Jesuit or Sulpician "Seigneuries" or property; they came to New France, to New York State, and to Canada. For the Mohawks, most came as members of the Mohawk Nation, of the Haudenosaunee, of the Five/Six Nations, League of Nations or Iroquois Confederacy — and subject to no one. In their eyes, they were settling in "Mohawk country," on land that had been their hunting grounds for centuries: Kahnawake, Kanesatake, Akwesasne. They came as Keepers of the Eastern Door, and still see themselves as such to-

1. I shall not deal here with two of the more recent and important but small offshoots of Akwesasne, namely Gray (1980) near Utica, N.Y. and Kanatsiohare (1993) in the Mohawk Valley, west of Albany, N.Y. At the time of this writing, they do not yet have the status of Mohawk communities.

day. They did not come to conquer land or to control it, but to protect the land of their ancestors for future generations. They were at home.

To the French and English, they came as allies of either the French or the British. To the Mohawks — since 1667, allies of both French and English at the same time — they came first as members of the Mohawk Nation and of the Haudenosaunee (called by Westerners the "Iroquois League of Nations"), the Iroquois Confederacy. And so they have remained to this day, despite colonial and colonialistic reductions of all sorts. In short, they never had nor have they today English or French hearts, but primarily Kanienke:haka and Haudenosaunee hearts. Furthermore, no matter how Christian and westernized many of them later became — wittingly or unwittingly — they never gave up their belief in the Great Law of Peace, or in the clan system, or in their traditional system of government as the core of their socio-political life. They never ceased to be primarily Kanienke:haka and Haudenosaunee. The Mohawk dynamics of peace remained at the core of their lifestyle. That is what I venture to show summarily in the following pages.

I shall first elaborate a little more on the three oldest communities (Kahnawake, Kanesatake, Akwesasne).

### The Mohawk Communities Move North

The traditional location of the Mohawk communities had for centuries been in the Mohawk Valley, along the Mohawk River in what is today called Albany and the area West of Albany, where they had many villages.\* But some of their hunting and fishing grounds had been along the St. Lawrence River for centuries — at St. Regis Point (present site of Akwesasne), for example, and all along the southern shore of the St. Lawrence up to the mouth of the Iroquois River (now called the Richelieu). Tradition also says that in the old days, they had villages all along the North shore of the St. Lawrence river, from Québec to Kingston, and at the present site of Kanesatake (called Oka by outsiders).

Starting in 1667, the Mohawk people gradually left the Mohawk Valley and settled in their former camping grounds, namely Kahnawake, Kanesatake in 1721, and Akwesasne in 1747. With the growing trouble in the Mohawk village settlements of the Mohawk valley, caused specifically by the invasions of White settlers and then by the American War of Independence (1775-1783), the Mohawk valley settlements had completely disappeared by 1783. The people had removed themselves to Kahnawake, Kanesatake and Akwesasne, as well as to Grand River Country and Tyendinaga in what is now called Ontario. The later settlement of Watha (1881) was an offshoot of Kanesatake, and Ganienkeh (1974) an offshoot of Kahnawake.

\* See Joseph Bruchac, "Ostungo — A Mohawk Village in 1491," *National Geographic*, Vol. 180, No. 4, October 1991 (1491 — *America Before Columbus*), pp. 68-83, for an imaginative evocation of life in the Mohawk Valley before the Europeans arrived. Vibrant paintings by Jack Unruh help bring the old stories to life. [Ed.]

## The Community of Kahnawake<sup>2</sup>

### 1667-1735

After the 1665 peace alliance with the French, some Mohawks, for religious, economic and political reasons, moved in 1667 to one of their traditional hunting and camping sites on the St. Lawrence river which was then occupied by the Jesuits. Huron captives, mostly Christianized, and their younger brothers, the Oneidas, also came. The main reason for Mohawks moving into the French Jesuit mission seems to have been a concession on the part of the Mohawks to strengthen the peace alliance they had made with the French in 1653 and to better play their role as Keepers of the Eastern Door.<sup>3</sup>

Both older and more recent studies have shown that these various Nations (Mohawk, Huron, Oneida) maintained their own chiefs and elders and Clan Mothers within the respective Nations, whether they were Christian or not. But Kahnawake was from the outset a predominantly Mohawk settlement — even by name — and its members came primarily from Mohawk valley villages with whom they retained their ties. Already in 1673 the Mohawks were the majority, and Mohawk the common language; the first two *rotiyaners* were named. In contrast to the Huron settlements, Mohawk political life remained independent of the Christian institutions set in place by the Jesuits (Jetten).

As we have insisted, they were not primarily "Christian Indians" or "praying Indians," but Mohawks and Haudenosaunee. While the French saw them as subjects and French citizens — *des naturels françois* — and laid down rules officially subjugating them to French law, the Mohawks practised self-determination within their own village, travelled wherever they pleased, practised "illegal" trade between Montréal and Albany, and maintained the sovereignty of Kahnawake and Mohawk land, to the point that Governor Beauharnois lamented that the village was "a sort of Republic within New France." "They gleefully flouted French authority, made their own trade policy. Despite the efforts of both New France and New York to curb their illegal commerce and to have them side with one to the exclusion of the other, they were beholden to neither colony, and their first loyalty remained to their Mohawk Nation and to the Iroquois Confederacy. They demanded, practised and enjoyed diplomatic immunity in criminal matters, spoke Mohawk (they did not learn French till the end of the French regime) and enjoyed well-developed trading and political relationships with whomsoever they pleased. They were

2. See main sources for this section, p. 9.

3. However, according to John Fadden (*Syracuse Post Standard*), the move to Kahnawake was denounced by the Confederacy for giving allegiance to an outside government (via the Jesuits).

also able to assert their independence on the battleground. In military policy, especially in the woods, they went their own way sometimes fomenting dissent among other Indians, asserting their independence and loyalty to the Six Nations Confederacy and to the Iroquois, merely pretending to fight against their fellow Iroquois."<sup>4</sup> "They may have been divided among themselves, but French officials still considered them to be in control of their own decision-making... they were always able to reconcile differing opinions among themselves in such a way as to retain their self-determination against the wishes of both the French and the English..." (Green).

### 1735-1889

It would seem that during the Great Peace of Montréal in 1701, a political alliance was formed between the Christian Mohawks of Kanawake, the Christian Hurons, and the Christian Algonquins; an alliance that, at one point, was called the Seven Nations Confederacy.<sup>5</sup>

In 1735, these Christian Mohawks of Kahnawake and Kanesatake, along with the Christian Algonquins of Kanesatake, enter the Covenant Chain of the Six Nations Confederacy, but retain their links with "Father *Onontio*" and "Brother *Corlaer*."<sup>6</sup> And they work towards bringing in the Abenakis and all the other Indian Nations into the Confederacy.

In 1740, the French recognise the existence of an alliance of predominantly Iroquois groups residing along the St. Lawrence River and call them the "Seven Nations of Canada." They are known to the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy as allies and admitted to the Confederacy as a sub-government that speaks through the Onondaga Nation. The Seven Nations were known to have a Life Chief community system of government (later known as the Long Hairs) based as nearly as possible on the principles of the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy. This government has been called a creation of Father Picquette, at Oswegatchie between 1749 and 1755. It is, however, fair to state that he only facilitated a political practise, similar to the government of the Iroquois, after he studied its original form.<sup>7</sup>

4. It must be added, however, that Kahnawake Mohawks actually did attack, at one time, Seneca settlements.

5. Delage mentions that the Seven Nations Confederacy could have been formed at that time or even before (*op. cit.*, p. 46). It must be made clear however that they were mostly communities, not Nations.

6. *Onontio* is a translation of an early French negotiator's name, namely Beaumont (Beautiful Mountain). *Onontio* was and is still used to refer to the king. *Corlaer* is the name of a Dutch/German negotiator. The name *Corlaer* was and is still used by Mohawks to refer to the Governor of New York. It was the custom, among the Mohawks, to have permanent titles for their chiefs. So they gave permanent titles to the heads of other Nations. For example, President George Washington was called *Ranataka'rias* (town attacker), because he attacked and destroyed the Iroquois villages. This remains the name given today to the President of the U.S.A.

7. See Akwesasne Land Base Document, cited on page 27.

In 1751, all Seven Nations entered the Covenant Chain. There exists a Caughnawaga Oka St. Regis belt, sometimes called the Seven Nations belt, which embodies the pledge of the seven Christianized Nations to keep an honest peace; the crooked line on the belt means that their future is uncertain. It was given to the Six Nations by the Seven Nations to mark their "linking of arms" to the Iroquois Confederacy and to the Great Law of Peace. Kahnawake was to be the Fire of the Seven Nations alliance and of the Covenant Chain until the 19th century. The Seven Nations were recognized by the British in 1762, and Kahnawake was recognized as Mohawk land.

In 1763, the Seven Nations invited the Western Indian Nations to join the Covenant Chain. In 1770, there was a Seven Nations renewal of the Covenant Chain through Kahnawake.

It is fair to say that throughout the 19th century, the Kahnawake Mohawks remained faithful not only to their traditional forms of government, but to the Mohawk Nation Council of Chiefs and the Iroquois Confederacy. Everywhere, they tried to protect Mohawk lands (Vermont, New York, Canada), with the exception of a few individuals from Kahnawake who, in 1796, and without authority to do so, handed over claimed land in Mohawk territory — previously set aside by the Mohawk Nation for use by the Seven Nations — to New York State, thus reducing the land at Akwesasne to a six-mile square and three other small parcels.

With the Central Fire of the Mohawk Nation moving to Akwesasne in 1888 and the nomination of nine condoled chiefs on the American side of Akwesasne, all the while keeping the Traditional Life Chief community system of government on the Canadian side, there was forged an even stronger traditional link between Kanawake, the Mohawk Nation Council of Chiefs,<sup>8</sup> and the Six Nations Confederacy — a link which was to unravel itself throughout the 20th century.

### 1888-1993

Already in 1890, in response to the Canadian attempt to introduce an elective system in all Mohawk communities, Akwesasne, Kahnawake and Kanesatake, together, write the Canadian government — addressed as "Brother" — to say in no uncertain terms that they intend to keep their traditional form of government and to preserve the Six Nations Confederacy. The women write again in 1891 to complain about "band council" chiefs. In 1898, Kahnawake refuses to participate in the Band Council system, elected against their will.

In the 1900's they are forced into separate Catholic or Protestant schools and forbidden to speak Mohawk or to have Native programs.

In the 1920's, after the Paul Diabo case, the Mohawk nation at Kahnawake reasserts its traditional relationship with the Confederacy. On June

8. Kahnawake, since then, has spoken in the Grand Council through the Akwesasne condoled chiefs.

30, 1924, the Mohawk Nation, with delegates from Akwesasne, Kanesatake and Kahnawake, reaffirms its ancient ties with the Six Nations Confederacy. And again in 1927, when a written version of the Great Law of Peace — the Newhouse version — is received in Kahnawake (where the Grand Council meets for the first time), the first Longhouse is built. That same year, the Grand Council rises up against jailing of an Akwesasne Chief who had pulled his children out of the Canadian school system. In November, it reconvenes in Kahnawake to discuss issues of education, border rights and the Indian Act.

1929-1939 - During these depression years, there was great solidarity and the Kahnawake people developed a system of government which relied on the two systems: national affairs concerning Kahnawake's relationship to other Mohawk settlements, the Confederacy and foreign governments were handled by the traditional Mohawk Council, while business which required dealings with the Department of Indian Affairs was handled by the Band Council. They co-operated for a short time.

1942 - This year marked the last condolence of *Rotiyaner* at Kahnawake. Nine of them are installed by the Cayuga nation (Grand River), whose duty it is to condole the Chiefs of the Mohawk nation.<sup>9</sup> Both Band Council and Longhouse submit testimony before the Indian Act Review Committee. They demand: restoration of their primordial rights, respect for and fulfilment of Treaty obligations, and their recognition as a sovereign Nation.

"We have no desire to be governed by the 'Indian Act'... There can be only one government for us: the Six Nations Government... We demand the abolition of the Indian Act on behalf of the Six Nations Confederacy... the removal of all white men from our reserve... We want it known that the lands in our reserves are the sole property of the Indians... we will be forced to set up blockades on all roads... By virtue of our treaty rights, the Indians of the Six Nations are not liable to any federal or provincial laws within their territories... not liable to payment of taxes to either federal or provincial governments... The right to decide as to who or whom belongs to this band or other band of Six Nations lies with the jurisdiction of the local (traditional) chiefs and (Band) councillors... We demand a refund of all moneys collected from Indians as income and electric tax, etc... We, the Six Nations Indians, by our International Treaty are allies of his Majesty's government, therefore we are allies of Canada and the Commonwealth... We also complain and object to the behaviour and activities of the Jesuit Society... They are meddling in our affairs... have set themselves up in business in a big way by operating bingos and euchre games of chance, these games are in the category of gambling. This teaches our children to take chances, thereby becoming gamblers...

9. For the Turtle clan: Frank Goodleaf, Angus Lahache. For the Bear clan: James Montour, Angus Zachary, John Diabo, Jos Horne. For the Wolf clan: Matthew Diabo, Jos Philips, Peter Horne (?). Some of these were later deposed, sometimes not, but none of them is left today. There has been no condolence since then. Only one is still alive who is seen by some as being a condoled chief: Eddie Delaronde. But it seems that he had not been properly condoled according to protocol, i.e., by the Cayuga Nation at Grand River.

Signed, We the council of Caughnawaga, members of the Six Nations Confederacy."

Following this, the Department of Indian Affairs hears various other testimonies and recommends straightaway "the abolition of reserves" and the "economic assimilation of Indians into the body politic."

1954 - Canada and the U.S. begin construction of the St. Lawrence Seaway.

Most people of Kahnawake decided not to sell their lands for the Seaway, but a few did. This divided the people. The Band Council became more and more distant from the Longhouse since it recognized expropriation of lands but sought at the same time to see how much money Kahnawake could get from the Seaway. In 1959, the Seaway opens, but from 1954 to 1964 the Band Council and Longhouse drifted apart.

1967 - Religious differences are laid aside in the schools, through a combined school committee. Fight to gain control over their education.

1972 - The Kahnawake Longhouse begins to be agitated by internal and external elements (see Warrior Society, pp. 40 ss). This finishes with a clash between Longhouse and Band Council over eviction of non-Native families, and the Moss Lake occupation in the Adirondacks by a group of militant traditionalists (1974). (See Ganienkeh, pp. 36 ss.)

1978 - Protest against Bill 101 as a violation of the Two-Row Wampum Treaty. Creation of the Survival School.

1979 - The people of Kahnawake give a mandate to the Band Council to return to traditional government. In 1980, the Band Council and Longhouse begin to restore the unity of 1939-1947.

1980-1985 - Unity restored. In 1983, the Band Council chiefs of Kahnawake, Akwesasne, and Tyendinaga make a common declaration: Our government is that of the Confederacy, based on the *Kayanerekowa*; we are the Mohawk Nation and we are not citizens of Canada or the United States. We are moving away from the Indian Act and are returning gradually to our traditional government (see text in: *Akwesasne Notes* 17(5): 9-10). An Akwesasne Chief, Sakokwenionkwaw (Tom Porter), is invited to teach traditional ways to the Kahnawake people - to the young and the community at large - for a full year.

1985-1990 - Intensification of Warrior Society activities within Kahnawake and in other Mohawk communities. Beginning of their illegal activities: contraband cigarettes, construction of a super-bingo without the consensus of the people, bullying of the Band Councils of the communities, and criticism of traditional leaders who do not encourage their activities. Finally, opposition breaks out between pro-gambling and anti-gambling forces, between Warrior traditionalists and traditional Peace Chiefs. Blocking of Mercier Bridge by the Warriors without consent of the Community, take-over of the Longhouse by the pro-Warrior elements - the Band Council, not daring to be too critical of the pro-Warrior elements, tolerates the pro-Warrior Longhouse. In the meantime, the dynamics of peace continue in Kahnawake through the Mohawk Longhouse-by-the-Mohawk-Trail, which remains faithful to the Mohawk

Nation Council of Chiefs and to the Six Nations Confederacy at Onondaga; also through the "Good Minds" *Ka'nikonhri:io*: community meetings, which aim at community healing and which call for a return to community consensus in order to bring about reconciliation between Mohawks and their own Council of Chiefs/Six Nations Confederacy, as well as between non-Mohawks and the legitimate traditional government of the Mohawks and Confederacy.

1991-1993 - Some renewed efforts are made on the part of the Mohawk Council to contact the Confederacy government. But because of the schism caused by the Warriors and pro-casino traditionalists, it is not clear which are the Confederate Chiefs to whom it wishes to return.

Throughout all this, however, there is a deep common thrust toward acting more and more as a community of the Mohawk Nation and of the Mohawk traditional government, as well as toward being recognized as such by outside peoples and governments.

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## The Community of Kanesatake

### Origins

Kanesatake<sup>10</sup> is the original Mohawk name for that particular area and community which was later to be named by Europeans in 1721 "la Mission du Lac des Deux-Montagnes" and, in 1867, Oka.<sup>11</sup> Today, Kanesatake is still the name given it by the Mohawk community residing there. It has been the common residence of Mohawks and Algonquins since time immemorial, before the coming of the Europeans. Mohawk families were living there when the Sulpicians first came to establish a mission in the area in 1721.

Long before the Sulpicians ever came to this continent, various Native peoples used to live on the Mountain of Montreal (today called Mount Royal). It is reported that there were eight Native families living there in 1671. The Sulpicians used to go and visit them regularly. So in 1675, the Sulpicians decided to open a Mission, after the Hurons of Kahnawake had insistently asked to have some of the fertile agricultural land precisely in the area where some Indians were already settled. In 1676, a wooden residence for the missionaries, a chapel, a school and a small fort were built. In 1683, there were already 210 Natives there, including Algonquins and Mohawks. The Sulpicians were interested in converting and civilising them, but also in using them to clear out the land in order to eventually sell it to European settlers and make some profit for their Order. It is from that Native Christian community on the Mountain that the first Algonquins and Mohawks came from, who were to later follow the Sulpicians to "La Mission du Lac des Deux-Montagnes." But previous to that, in 1696, after an explicit demand from Native Chiefs, the Sulpicians moved with their Native Christians to Sault-au-Récollet where they continued to pursue the same policies.

In 1717, the Sulpicians managed to get a new "Seigneurie" from King Louis XV, "for the Indians" at Kanesatake, on the Lake of Two Mountains. As Agneeta told the British Indian department officials on February 7, 1787:

"As was the custom of our forefathers, we immediately set about making a (wampum) belt... by which our children would see that the land was to be theirs forever, and as was customary with our ancestors, we placed the figure of a dog at each end of the belt, to guard our property and to give notice when an enemy approached."

10. Meaning in Mohawk: hills of frozen snow.

11. Oka is an Algonquin word, meaning: golden fish.

The "Lac des Deux-Montagnes" mission was therefore established — "for the Indians" — in 1721. The transfer was thus no longer to Kanesatake but to "la Mission du Lac des Deux-Montagnes." It was presented as something for the good of the Natives, and also for the good of the colony. It was a strategic place both militarily and commercially; an excellent observatory from which it was possible to control any incoming or outgoing boat or ship; situated at the mouth of the Outaouais river, the great route to the West and to the fur kingdom; with the additional incentive that these Christian Natives, allies of the French, could serve as a buffer zone and defence against the "evil" Iroquois.

For a brief moment during the negotiations, it was mentioned that the Indians might be given some of the land — as a matter of fact, the Mohawks said later on that they were promised land —, but the Sulpicians insisted privately to the Government that all the lands should be given to the Seminary i.e., the Sulpicians, since "Native peoples were unable to preserve things that are most necessary for them." The Sulpicians demanded, moreover, that the land be conceded to them "in perpetuity." They knew very well — from experience — that Natives could be employed to clear the land so that the Sulpicians could eventually sell it to White settlers for a tidy profit when the time was ripe. In order to gain their confidence, they felt that these motives should be hidden from the Natives.<sup>12</sup> So they camouflaged their profit motive under the seemingly benign motive of protecting the Natives from the White man's bad influence and of making good Christians and citizens out of them.<sup>13</sup>

The Sulpicians allowed these Natives to occupy certain lands "for their families," but only according to the good offices of the Sulpicians. It was very clear, from the start, that the Sulpicians never had any intention of giving parcels of that land to any Native Indian, even though the latter were the ones delegated to do the work of clearing it and rendering it saleable.<sup>14</sup>

12. See G. Boileau *Le Silence des Messieurs. Oka, terre indienne* (Mérédien, 1991) 285 p.

13. This was called "francisation." But the Sulpician Fr. Marinier himself says that they only succeeded in bringing about "une francisation de surface."

14. G. Boileau, *op. cit.*

## 1721-1763: The French Regime

Mohawks (who were at first a minority) and Algonquins lived peacefully side-by-side, each with their own separate governments, on small plots of land allocated them by Sulpicians — they had the usufruct only — for their family needs, not for commercial purposes. This did not create any problems at first, since both lived primarily from the hunt. They were absent from October to June each year. The Algonquins, who were nomads, eventually left Kanesatake altogether as we shall see, while the Mohawks — always more horticulturally based — stayed on, although the Sulpicians complained that "they did not like to work the land" (in the European way).

The Mohawks — many of whom came from Kahnawake — were bent on strengthening the peace alliance they had made with the French in 1653 and 1701, and on playing their role of Keepers of the Eastern Door (of the Confederacy). Hence their involvement also with the French military excursions. But they held fast to the Six Nations' policy of neutrality. Furthermore, in 1735 they had entered the Covenant Chain of the Confederacy, along with the Christian Mohawks of Kanawake and their Christian Algonquin brothers of Kanesatake.

It must be noted that Father Picquet, who was to be the founder of the Oswegatchie mission and facilitator (if not creator) of the Life Chief system of government, was director of the Mission des Deux-Montagnes from 1739 to 1749. When governor Beauharnois visited Kanesatake in 1742, he spoke to the "three chiefs of the Iroquois tribes: Bear, Turtle and Wolf" and named one of them Grand Chief and called the latter "The Right Arm". Missionaries and traders were known to give privileges to Christians over non-Christian Natives.<sup>15</sup> This had a very divisive effect on each Native community. Furthermore, while Natives were allowed to keep their clan and traditional system of government, they were discouraged from following Native religious ceremonies and practises, since these were considered pagan and akin to witchcraft. They were recompensed for taking on Catholic ways and practises (the Natives did this, as a concession, to strengthen their peace alliance, and also for the material benefits accruing). However, Kanesatake Mohawks continued to practise the fur trade with Albany and with whomever they wished, although they were reprimanded and punished in different ways by the French for doing so.

The Sulpicians tried to control everything in Kanesatake. They did not allow alcohol, or marriage with Whites, and had a tendency to isolate the Natives from the Whites. As long as the hunt and the fur trade continued, they did not have much of a hold on the Natives while these were away, and the latter did not complain. But as the hunt and fur trade diminished and the Mohawks became more numerous (in 1755, half the Kanesatake population

15. The Christian Natives receiving a better price for their furs, more increments, more respect and encouragement, and finally more important posts in the mission.

was Mohawk), the small Mohawk plots of land were not sufficient. They started asserting what had always been obvious to them, namely the freedom to use more of what they considered their traditional land as they deemed fit.

## 1763-1923

Thus in 1763, one of the Natives sold his house to an English merchant. Montréal objects: the Seminary has exclusive rights of sale. In 1780, the Seminary orders a land survey of the Seigneurie. More hostility between Natives and Sulpicians.

1780-1781 - From 1721 to 1781, the Native peoples enjoyed the use of some of the land, worked hard at clearing it, thinking that they belonged to it and it to them, but lo and behold, in 1780-81 alone, the Sulpicians conceded 118 of the best parcels to White settlers. The Natives discover that they are to occupy the poorest land in the area, even though they had cleared the best land. The first serious land claim on the part of the Natives came in 1781, immediately after 66 of the best parcels of land had been written off to White settlers by the Sulpicians. The Mohawk leaders met with Colonel Campbell (of Native Affairs) and affirmed unequivocally that the Sulpicians had no right to sell any of the lands of the Seigneurie and that these belonged exclusively to the Natives. As proof, they showed him an old wampum belt that said so unequivocally.<sup>16</sup> They gave the wampum to the Governor, who returned it to them saying that it had no legal value.

1788 - Mohawks presented the same wampum to Mr. Johnson, explaining that it had been made at the time of the move to Kanesatake, as is usually done by Mohawks in such circumstances, and buried all these years for safe keeping. They had unearthed it because the Missionaries were claiming that the Seigneurie lands did not belong to the Natives. The Governor reiterated that this did not constitute a valid title, but offered them some land near the Seigneurie of St. Régis. They refused. Many Algonquins agreed with them.

Over the next 30 years, from 1780 to 1809, 950 parcels of land were conceded to White settlers. None went to the Natives. In 1826, the total was 1270. Finally, 1,328 lands were allotted to the Whites. In 1876, the Whites were occupying almost all of the lands except for a few square miles. In 1867, the population was 856: of which 593 were Natives and 263 French-Canadians. In 1875, the Whites consolidated themselves into a municipality: Oka.

1794, 1798,<sup>17</sup> 1802, 1818, 1828, 1848, 1851 - Mohawks continue to claim their lands, but without success. In the 1830's, since game for the hunt had become quite scarce, they started cutting Seigneurie wood and selling it

16. B. Boileau, *op. cit.*

17. Along with Kahnawake and Akwesasne Mohawks, they press their land claim to lands east of Lake Champlain (Vermont).

without Sulpician permission. Governor Colborne had given them the okay to do so in 1839. The Seigneurie got tough: trials, jailing, fines. In 1848, the Mohawks wish to open an English school and invite a Methodist minister. For this they received Methodist backing. In 1852, Bishop Bourget excommunicates 11 Iroquois and four Algonquins, who finally retract.

1853 - The government creates the Maniwaki reservation for the Seigneurie Algonquins and that of Doncaster for the Mohawks. Many Algonquins leave for Maniwaki, but the Mohawks do not move to Doncaster.

1868 - Mohawk Joseph Onassakenrat (Corinte) is named Chief. Some Mohawks occupy lands "belonging to the Sulpician domain." They reassert their right to engage in the wood trade from their lands.

1869 - Sixty Catholic Mohawks — and two Algonquins — become Methodists. "Apostates!," cry the Sulpicians. The "apostates" try to build a Methodist Church. The "Seminary" intervenes and jails the guilty. The majority of Mohawks become Methodists. With no "religious" rationale remaining, the Seminary now justifies its presence on the site by selling off lands on a massive scale to the Whites. In February 1869, some Mohawks — in pretty good number — officially tell the Sulpicians to leave and never come back. Some also ask that all Whites leave the Seigneurie.<sup>18</sup>

1870 - The Protestants of Montréal, Outaouais and Laurentides support the Natives and lobby the government — without success — to recognise Native title to their lands.

1875 - Some Mohawks build a Methodist Church. There is a trial. Mohawks lose and the Church is dismantled by the Whites on Dec. 7, 1875. The municipality of Oka is formed.

1877 - The Whites are nervous. They report that some Natives are armed, roam the village, shoot and utter insults. They ask help from the Federal government. Eight Natives are arrested and judged guilty. Whites accuse Mohawks of setting the Seminary buildings on fire: the rectory, the church, etc. Fourteen more Mohawks are arrested and jailed. In Oka, the police patrol on a permanent basis. The trials last from 1877 to 1880. More lands are sold to the Whites. The Trappists move in. Twenty-three Native families leave for Parry Sound, Ontario.

1880-90 - Hostilities continue between Sulpicians and Natives. The latter complain about the French squatters. In 1881, eleven Mohawk families move to Watha, Ontario.

1890 - Kanesatake along with Kahnawake Mohawks refuse the elective system of the Indian Act and continue with the traditional Life Chief system of government.

18. They are considered by Mohawks to be "squatters" on their land.

1902 - More tensions. Some Natives are said to take the best wood from the lands of the citizens of Oka. In 1905, there is a physical confrontation. A single shot is fired into the air.

1910-11 - The Supreme Court of Canada confirms the Sulpicians' rights to the Seigneurie. The Mohawks go to the Privy Council in London, England. Their claim is denied.

## 1924-1989

During this period, some of the Mohawks reaffirm their ancient ties with the Six Nations Confederacy, but in an even deeper way. This first comes about in 1924, after the P. Diabo case, where they are joined by Akwesasne and Kahnawake. In 1929, an attempt was made to condole existing traditional life Chiefs, v.g. Martin Martin, Mitchell Cole, and others, but their antlers were removed immediately by the Six Nations Confederacy because they were following the White man's religion.

1934 - The Indian Chiefs forbid the police to enter their lands, saying that Mohawks are not subject to the laws of the Dominion. In the late 1940's, some Mohawks — Charlie Gabriel and his brother-in-law Norman Bonspiel — did much to bring Longhouse traditions back into Kanesatake, Gabriel having worked in Onondaga and married in the Longhouse there. It was a time when Kahnawake and Akwesasne were also rejecting the Band Council system, reaffirming Mohawk sovereignty, and reverting to the traditional Mohawk government of condoled chiefs.

1960's - The first chiefs to be condoled were Frank Moses, Moses Gabriel and Samson Gabriel (the latter is still alive). The first new Longhouse was also built at that time and still exists.

In the late 1940's the Federal Government bought from the Sulpicians some of the remaining land occupied by the Mohawks, and has held it ever since. It has never been clear, however, whether the land was considered as an "Indian reserve" under the Indian Act. Hence the ambiguity regarding an elective system in Kanesatake. In the 1960s, some Mohawks asked to have the status of a reservation. They were refused.

In 1969, the Federal government approved the replacement of what ought to be — in its eyes — the regular elective system of a reserve, with a "hereditary" Band Council of 12 chiefs. The latter claimed to follow the traditional clan system of the six Nations Confederacy, but was seen by the Kanesatake Longhouse of condoled chiefs and by the Six Nations Confederacy itself, as what might be called an "imitation Longhouse," cut off from the Confederacy. Furthermore, there were Mohawks who sought to become a regular reservation with a regular elective system: in 1986 this group became the Indian League for Democracy, and was to replace the hereditary system of government, after the Federally approved plebiscite of 1991.

There were tensions, not only among these various elements and groups, but also within the Longhouse itself, which has paralysed some Longhouse functions since 1974. In very recent years, moreover, other internal elements cropped up to complicate the picture: contraband activities on the part of some individuals — cigarette smuggling, gambling, drugs, etc. — not to mention Bill C31, which brought the Metis into the area.

Moreover, irrespective of internal tensions regarding the proper authority and government within the community, or regarding what constitutes proper or improper economic activity, it can be said that the community as a whole has always agreed regarding the nature and extent of their land claim.<sup>19</sup>

There has been no change in the Kanesatake position since the early and late 1700's. Their understanding was and is that the land was and is theirs and did not — does not — belong to the priests, or to the Federal Government, any more than it belonged to the King of France or the British Crown. No one ever had any right to sell it off.

So in 1973, the three Mohawk communities of Kanesatake, Kahnawake and Akwesasne presented a global claim to Ottawa and Québec based on their aboriginal rights. It was rejected in 1975; the land claims policies of the government of Canada do not recognise "aboriginal title" claims in Southern Québec; they require what they call "uninterrupted traditional use and occupation of the land".<sup>20</sup>

In 1976-77, specific land claims were prepared concerning Kanesatake's common lands. The case went to the highest possible court, and the Mohawks lost. If they were to go to court again, they would also likely lose again, for several reasons — including technical defences (e.g., statutes of limitation) available to Canada and Québec. Instead, the claim went through the Federal government's land claims process and was repeatedly rejected. The only remaining way to have the claim recognized as just and proper seemed to be through political action. Conflicts between Mohawks and developers grew, and court cases regarding the rights of Mohawks to build in the town of Oka without municipal permits continued.

### 1990 The Oka Crisis

What some have called the "Oka crisis" would require a separate and more elaborate treatment, which cannot be given here. Suffice it to say that the media have presented it merely as a Mohawk Warrior vs. Government con-

19. Furthermore, they all consider themselves part of the Mohawk Nation and of the Haudenosaunee (people of the Longhouse), whether they are members of the Longhouse or not. As one Longhouse member told me: "It is not the Longhouse which makes the people, because the people are the Longhouse. I am first a Haudenosaunee. There can only be one Longhouse: the Haudenosaunee, the community."

20. Report of the Confederacy, *op. cit.*

frontation. But the real story, the peaceful one from the side of the Kanesatake community and the non-Warrior Mohawks, has not yet been told.<sup>21</sup>

This larger story of the majority of Mohawks caught in the middle, was completely lost sight of during the entire eight months of the confrontation — by the Canadian, Québec and municipal government on the one hand, and by members of the Warrior Society, their sympathisers and other Native Nations on the other, all of whom came from the outside and, wittingly or unwittingly, can be said to have "hijacked" the Kanesatake Mohawk community side of the negotiations and the standoff as a whole.

It must be remembered that it all started with a very peaceful and decent refusal on the part of the entire Kanesatake community to allow a nine-hole golf course to be expanded — by the local mayor and business interests — into an 18-hole course on traditional Mohawk sacred land, a small remaining portion of the land that had been unjustly taken over by outside speculators and proprietors for the last 200 years. The Kanesatake people had tried to stop this by acting through the courts, but to no avail. So they set up — in desperation — a minuscule, symbolic, unarmed barricade on the track leading into the pine lot, in order to stop contractors from coming in. After the Québec Superior court issued an order to remove the barricade on June 30, the Mohawk community had not moved. So the mayor called in the Sûreté du Québec on July 10. By that time, some Mohawks inside the barricade had picked up guns (some for the first time in their lives), in order to protect themselves and their community. On July 11, 100 Québec police attacked, a crossfire ensued and, after one of their men was killed, the Sûreté retreated. A new barricade was then set up on route 344 by the barricade people, blocking outside traffic from East to West into Kanesatake. Concurrently, the Mercier bridge was blocked by the Kahnawake Warrior Society and the Mohawk Nation Office.

Already on July 10, the Kanesatake community delegates had been asked by the community to meet with a government official at the barricades. When the latter arrived, the Mohawks at the barricades refused to meet with this official, to the great consternation of the Mohawk delegates who reproached them for not keeping the word of their community. Some outside of the community — Warriors and pro-Warrior elements — were obviously present and already seeing to it that the negotiations veered in another direction. After a week, these people had taken over the negotiations from the Kanesatake community and were injecting new demands that were not the original demands of the community. It is clear that the Kanesatake community people, who were manning the barricades and defending their community at this dangerous juncture, were happy to get Mohawk Native support, wherever it came from. They were taking their stand with great courage, and could not be too discriminating about who these people were and where they stood in terms of the Mohawk Nation Council of Chiefs and the Six Nations Confederacy. But it so happened that

21. Nor for that matter the story of the Mayor and his business interests and political dealings... nor even the story of the Whites (inside or outside the community) who backed up the Kanesatake community's rightful claims.

most of these outside people had broken off from the latter a few years back and preferred to set themselves up as the Longhouse and Confederacy.

Now, as soon as the Mohawk Nation Council and Six Nations Confederacy saw that the barricades had been infiltrated and that the negotiations were partly in the hands of strangers, they either backed off or simply did not intervene — all the more so, since proper Mohawk protocol in such matters is to intervene only when invited by the local condoled chief. The latter had not yet called on the Confederacy. The Confederacy, in its report on the Summer of 1990, has written: "It is important to realise that not everybody who picked up guns at Kanesatake and Kahnawake is linked to the commercial interests or to the Warriors. Many of them were simply acting under the sincere belief that they had to protect their communities from attack. The Confederacy made it clear to Canada and Québec that it does not consider such people to be criminals." But there were also Warriors and people linked to commercial interests (not to mention trouble-makers) behind the barricades. And since the media focused its attention mostly on these people, the peaceful resistance of the Kanesatake community itself sank below the surface. Furthermore, the outside commercial interests and Warrior forces in the negotiating team had transformed the limited specific local claim of the Kanesatake community into much broader claims, some of which, like national sovereignty and the global Kanesatake and Mohawk land claim, were quite legitimate but not necessarily appropriate,<sup>22</sup> while other claims, demanding that Canada ratify a treaty made between the Six Nations and the U.S. almost 200 years ago, or that the World Court become the judge of all disputes, were not realistic demands. And they carried out their negotiations through the media.<sup>23</sup>

At first, the Six Nations Confederacy declined Native Affairs Minister John Ciaccia's invitation to join talks that were run by people opposed to the Confederacy and to the Mohawk Nation Council, until they were invited on August 16th — according to protocol — by the local Kanesatake condoled chief, to take action to resolve the crisis. The Confederacy's negotiating approach was to resolve immediately what could be resolved immediately, and to set up clear and binding processes to resolve the things that must take longer to work out. The Confederacy started negotiations with Minister Ciaccia, but not without consulting the Kanesatake community, the Mohawk Nation Office at Kahnawake, and other, self-appointed delegates among traditional leaders<sup>24</sup> with whom the barricaded treatment centre people were ready to talk.

The Confederacy delegates met with two major obstacles: the Warriors and commercial interest forces on the one hand, the Québec and Federal governments on the other. The first were people who had tried to merge traditional beliefs and their own commercial enterprises; the Mohawk Nation Office in

22. Or, at that juncture, in keeping with the original Kanesatake community's specific claim.

23. On August 19th, a coalition of Kanesatake Mohawks appealed quietly to Native Indian leaders, claiming that the Warriors were "hijacking" the negotiations and that the issues of direct concern to the community in the area of land were not being addressed.

24. Doxtater, Anton, ...

Kahnawake for example and, to a lesser extent, the elected Council at Kahnawake, were linked to and working with the people controlling the Warrior Society, which in turn controlled the largest cigarette sales at Kahnawake. The same can be said of people like deposed chiefs Loran Thompson and Francis Boots in Akwesasne (who were deeply involved in the Mohawk negotiating team at Oka), and other traditional chiefs (see note #24) all of which had set themselves up as the "authority" in the Mohawk Nation or Six Nations Confederacy, thus undermining the authority symbolized by the condoled chiefs of the Mohawk Nation Council and of the Six Nations Confederacy.

As for the second obstacle — the Provincial and Federal governments (excluding Ciaccia) — they simply were not ready to negotiate with the Six Nations Confederacy of Chiefs as the sole legitimate voice of the Mohawk people. Had they understood and accepted that it was their duty to do so and the only realistic way out of the impasse, a peaceful and equitable solution could have been arrived at. Thus both the first and second obstacles, along with Mayor Ouellette, remain the main culprits of the Oka crisis and of the dead-end in Mohawk-Québécois relations even today.

There is no question that some of the most active Kanesatake Mohawks at the barricades were happy about the much-needed support from the Warriors and went along with most of their demands at the negotiating table. This has earned them the title of pro-Warrior forces in Kanesatake, a title that they now vehemently reject and maybe rightfully so. Yes, some of them were also critical of the Mohawk Nation Council Confederacy chiefs and even took their distance from the local condoled chief Samson Gabriel, but this does not mean that they have been officially rejected from the Longhouse and from the Confederacy as is the case with some of the Warriors from other communities. Furthermore, the fact that some Longhouse people from Kanesatake or from other communities and from the Six Nations Confederacy did not join in behind the barricades on July 10 and after — as long as the Warriors were there —<sup>25</sup> does not mean that they were traitors to the Kanesatake community and its cause, or that they were inactive; quite the contrary, they have been active before, during and after.<sup>26</sup> Finally, criticisms addressed by traditional Mohawks at the Warriors and at the commercial interests people behind the barricades for the way they took over and ran the negotiations, or walked out of Kahnawake when the army moved in, should not be seen as a critique of the Warriors' stand for a just cause, shared by all.

As the Confederacy stated so well: "The issues that remain outstanding, now that the most significant armed confrontations are over, are:

25. One must remember the suffering they had had to endure from the Warriors and the Warrior Society — who had bullied them, threatened them, condemned them as traitors to the Nation, and even shot at some of them. And also that Warriors were known as opportunists, using their sovereignty to engage in such immoral acts as smuggling and illicit gambling.

26. In many ways: through the public reading of the Great law of Peace, but also by avoiding public condemnation of the Warriors during this time of crisis, as well as efforts both at healing the communities, and helping White people and others to understand what was happening.

- a) the lack of a fair land claims/land rights resolution process.
- b) the land at Kanesatake.
- c) the lack of clear relations between Canada and the confederacy and the lack of respect by Canada for Haudenosaunee treaty rights.
- d) the lack of viable and appropriate economies in the communities. People would not tolerate cigarette smuggling and tax evasion, or gambling and high-stakes bingo, if they had a good quality of life with another economic base.
- e) the Québec police continue to surround Kahnawake and to patrol Kanesatake in a way that is bound to lead to more violent confrontations.
- f) all three Mohawk communities have been hurt badly and need healing in every possible way. So do their neighbors.
- g) Kanesatake needs to work out its forms of government in a way that will bring peace and unity of mind to the people of that community."

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### The Community of Akwesasne

Akwesasne (meaning "the place of the partridge") is the traditional name of the area along the St. Lawrence river, near Cornwall, Ontario and Hogansburg, New York which was later to be called the St. Regis Mohawk reservation. "There is ample archaeological evidence confirming the presence of Mohawk-Iroquois in the region, predating by centuries the arrival of Europeans in America. Like many Native communities, the area's Mohawk villages followed a cycle of growth, decline and abandonment while never completely leaving the rich waters of the St. Lawrence" (George).

Akwesasne was established as a permanent Mohawk settlement — after the Europeans arrived — in 1755, with people coming first from Akwesasne (1747), then from the Mohawk valley. A French Jesuit Mission was established, called St. Regis. The community was composed mainly of Mohawks with a few families of Algonquins, Onondagas and Oneidas.

About 1760, a community government was formed, using the Iroquois traditional system. This "Life Chief Community Government" was composed of 12 chiefs, three for each clan. The Mohawks had three clans: Bear, Wolf, and Turtle. The Onondagas were from the Snipe clan. The 12 chiefs were selected, not elected, by the Clan Mothers — that is, three women selecting their special chiefs from among their clan — and ratified by the Council of Chiefs. They held office for life and had condolees sitting on the Grand Council of the Six Nations Confederacy.

This was to be the real government of the whole Akwesasne community for more than a century, despite all efforts, on the part of both Canada and the U.S. to impose elected governments. Its seat was at first on the "U.S." side, then on the "Canadian" side (from 1852). In 1888, the Six Nations Confederacy, deeming it important to have a Mohawk Nation seat in the U.S., introduced the Life Chief/Mohawk Nation system on the American side of Akwesasne (nine condolees chiefs, nine vice-chiefs, nine Clan Mothers).<sup>27</sup> The

27. Condolees chiefs in the Mohawk tradition, are usually "entitled chiefs," that is, they are given a permanent title attached to their function and which is distinct from their own personal names, whether Mohawk, English or French. When they speak in Council, they do so under their permanent title. For example, the condolee chief of Kanesatake, publicly known as Samson Gabriel is called in his community by the personal Mohawk name Kanawato. But his official Mohawk title as condolee chief is Teharihoken, the same as that of his predecessors.

The nine condolees chiefs that were named in 1888 in Akwesasne did not have, however at that time, the Confederacy title names, but community names only. They spoke at the Grand Council through the Seneca. It is only in the 1930s that they were given Confederacy title names and spoke for themselves at the Grand Council.

latter is the one that remains the real government of the entire Akwesasne community to this day, in spite of the (imposed) Tribal Council on the U. S. side and the (imposed) Band Council on the Canadian side. The story is a complex one. Here is a brief summary.

In 1783, at the Treaty of Paris, Great Britain and the U.S. set their border directly through Akwesasne territory, thus dividing the community into the British-Canadian side, and the American side. As for the Mohawks, they saw themselves neither on one side nor on the other, but in Mohawk country. The Jay Treaty of 1794 between Great Britain and the U.S. was to assure their border-crossing rights, but instead this division was to plague the Mohawk community for centuries, as we shall see.

Furthermore, New York State very early on (1791), unilaterally assumed title to Mohawk lands, in disregard of U.S. Federal law, and sold six million acres of Mohawk land to an individual by the name of A. Macomb, exempting six square miles for use by the Indians of Akwesasne. In 1795 and 1796, the State managed to get individuals like Mohawk — not a chief! — Joseph Brant, and three non-Mohawks from Kahnawake, to sign away lands to New York State, even though they had no authority to do so. The Mohawks of Akwesasne were to receive payments and annuities and share these with Kahnawake.

#### On the United States side

##### 1802

The State of New York takes it upon itself to appoint three "trustees" (none of them Mohawks) to receive the annuities and transact business between the Life Chief community government and New York State.

##### 1812-1852

During the war of 1812 between the U.S. and Great Britain, Akwesasne remained neutral, except for some individuals who sided with one nation or the other. The money from the 1796 land leases was slow in getting to the people. People became very poor in 1813-1816, gripped by famine. In 1818, the British Indian agent takes away the Life Chief Council's power to collect rents; those who were neutral or fought for the Americans were refused rent money, unless they lived on the U.S. side. Accordingly, some 23 moved to the U.S. side, copied the look of the Life Chief council and, on their own, did business with New York State as if they were the official government — which they were emphatically not. From 1820 to 1850, epidemics claim the lives of half the population. In 1842, the U.S.-Canada border is reaffirmed and a border marker placed in the centre of St. Regis village. In 1852, the Life Chief traditional community government, which had fought hard to keep one government at Akwesasne, retreated to the Canadian side. This left the trustee system on the U.S. side.

##### 1852-1900

In 1889, the New York State legislature, through Law Ch. 554, tried to compel the people into an electoral process. In 1892, it imposed a mandatory elective form of government. No real elections occurred. (Remember, that in 1888, the Iroquois Confederacy had introduced a Life Chief (Mohawk Nation) traditional system of government on the U.S. side (with nine chiefs, etc., see above). One of the Life Chiefs was also a clerk in the U.S. trustee system.

In 1899, New York State tried to force an election. It was boycotted. Not a single vote was cast. In 1900, a secret and unadvertised election was held at a private home. Fifteen people were inducted to cast ballots for trustees. Only 11 did so.

##### 1900-1950

On June 8, 1935, 237 people voted overwhelmingly against the Indian Reorganisation Act and the trustee system, with only 46 for the trustee system. 1938 saw a popular referendum with 200 people voting against the elective system, and only five in support. In a 1942 general election for a trustee, only 25 people voted and the elected trustee gained only 17 votes. In a 1948 referendum, properly constituted according to New York State law, the overwhelming majority voted to abolish the trustee elected system. In 1949, and despite the protest of the people, an election was held on June 13, 1949. Armed State Troopers attended the polls and agents of the State intimidated and coerced the sick and elderly into voting, saying they would take away their welfare or medical aid if they didn't (*Indian Time*, April 26, 1991). The situation was complicated in 1948, when the U.S. Congress unilaterally extended the criminal jurisdiction of New York State to the territories of the Iroquois Confederacy, including Akwesasne, despite the latter's protest and without their consent. Civil jurisdiction was extended in 1950. (These legislative enactments, which continue in force, form the backdrop for the current crisis in Akwesasne.)

Resistance to an elective system of government on the U.S. side has continued. It culminated in the two-year siege of Racquette Point in 1979-1980, when New York State tried to arrest the Mohawk Nation Council Chiefs. (See details in *Akwesasne Notes*.)

#### On the Canadian side

We have already described (in Chapter 3 pp. 61 ss) how the British and then the Canadian government tried to force Mohawks into becoming their subjects and citizens through the imposition of the elective system. The high point came in 1899 when seven Life Chiefs were arrested for believing in the Life Chief community government. In 1900 the Life Chiefs were elected, and the government was called the St. Regis Band Council, but as terms ran out, no new election was held until 1915 when elections were forced again. But no new elections took place until 1947 when all the Mohawk communities demanded abolition of the Indian Act, as well as recognition of the Mohawk Nation and its traditional government. Finally, the Life Chiefs on the Canadian side faded out or died out by 1968, and were not replaced since the Mohawk Nation Council

of condoled chiefs already existed on the American side. The latter was the traditional government for all of Akwesasne.

In 1984, the St. Regis Band Council sought to return to traditional principles of government. Its name was changed to the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne. In 1986, it changed its election regulations so that the head chief can be elected by the people of the community instead of by the 12 Council members. It established its own electoral code: elections by customary methods, accepted by the Longhouse traditional chiefs — the Mohawk Nation Council of Chiefs — by means of a letter. In 1988, it conducted its own election with a three-year term, and tried to make changes within the structure of the Indian Act. It took over, for example, education, elections, and decisions about membership, but 99% of the by-laws it passed were disallowed by the Canadian authorities. The Council implemented them anyway. For example, when Canada refused to recognise the conservation by-laws it had set up, it registered them with the Mohawk Nation Council and set up its own conservation authority. Taking its authority from the people, it set up its own system. It established an Akwesasne Judicial Society with three commissions: the Mohawk Court Commission, the Legislative Commission, and the Police Commission. Community people from both sides of the community and representing all three Councils joined in a task force that resulted in the formation of a "Justice Society" for Akwesasne. They are currently working on a Code of Justice for all of Akwesasne (see Mitchell, *op. cit.*, for details).

#### 1968 - 1980 Political and Spiritual Assertiveness

This period was one of great traditional revival in Akwesasne. In 1967-68, Mohawk Ernest Benedict founded the educational *North American Indian Travelling College*. Soon after came the *White Roots of Peace*. Then the famous *International Bridge Blockade* by all Mohawks took place on Cornwall Island, which gave rise to the founding of *Akwesasne Notes*, the organ of the Mohawk Nation. The Mohawks sought their own school in which to start teaching Mohawk language, culture, history.

This growing spiritual and political assertiveness led to resistance to police intervention from the outside, even while seeming to work through Tribal or Band councils. In 1978, when one of the traditional chiefs of the Mohawk Nation Council was jailed for opposing the erecting of a barbed-wire fence around the reservation (approved by the Tribal Council), the whole Traditional Nation rose up and peacefully took over the local police station. Warrants were issued for the arrest of some Chiefs of the Mohawk Nation Council. Resistance continued, which led New York police to literally force the leaders and their protectors to barricade themselves at Racquette Point until 1980: men, women, and children. They had taken arms from the police station to defend themselves, in case they were attacked by New York police or their Mohawk backers. Finally, the New York accusations were lifted.

#### 1980-1993

Racquette Point's successful peaceful resistance — under great stress and hardship — built up Mohawk self-confidence and gave them a deeper and stronger sense of Traditional Mohawk Nationhood. In Akwesasne, it gave rise

to the *Akwesasne Freedom School for Children*, but also to co-operative alternative technology projects for greater economic self-reliance.

In 1983, the Mohawk Band Councils of Kahnawake, Akwesasne (on the Canadian side) and Tyendinaga, in a common statement to the government of Canada, declared not only that Mohawks were citizens primarily of their own Mohawk Nation, but that they were gradually re-educating themselves to their traditional form of government, namely that of the Iroquois Confederacy based on the Great Law of Peace, and that they had re-established the contact with the traditional chiefs in order to do so. They spoke of the Two-Row Treaty as the basis they saw for government-to-government relations. In 1984, as previously noted, the St. Regis Band Council started to return to traditional principles of government, with the blessing of the Mohawk Nation Council Chiefs. There were even traditionalists running for office and sitting on the New York Tribal Council along with the non-traditionalists. Furthermore, the three Councils were increasingly co-operating for the good of the Akwesasne Community.<sup>28</sup>

However, as we shall explain later in more detail, two new elements were to seriously disrupt this two-way co-operative movement between the Band Councils and the Traditional government on the one hand, and the trilateral movement of unity between the Councils on the other hand: the Warrior Society (called in Akwesasne: the Mohawk Sovereignty Security Force — MSSF —) and the contraband cigarette/gambling operations. The Warrior society had long ago seen its warriors as replacing both police and Band Council peacemakers. Furthermore, they wanted to rebuild the Confederacy according to what might be called a "Red Power" interpretation. At the same time there began — among both Warriors, progressives and some traditionalists — a "quick-money" business movement: sale of contraband cigarettes, and gambling (super-bingos and casinos). At first, all three councils in Akwesasne condemned both the Warriors and the illegal gambling. But the Warriors and the gamblers — by then already well-armed — started intimidating and even attacking their own people, discrediting the traditional chiefs, buying off young people, etc. — very nearly to the point of a civil war at Akwesasne. The Mohawk Nation Council and the Six Nations Confederacy repeatedly denounced gambling and Warrior activities. People tried to set up peaceful barricades to stop foreigners from coming to gamble into the reservation. But the Warriors violently broke through these barricades. They had become the gambling mafia's army.

The Mohawk Nation had to call on New York State and Québec to help restore order. The Warriors accused them of high treason to the Nation and threatened to kill them off. The peaceful traditional leaders and their people even had to take refuge — for a time — in the neighbouring town of Cornwall. Finally the police from New York and Québec did restore order to some extent; the casinos closed down and the shooting stopped, but not the contraband

28. One be careful not to interpret this in the sense that the Mohawk Nation Council was selling out to the elective system of government. It was not. There is a big difference between talking with and helping people at the tribal Councils, co-operating for the good of the community, etc., and replacing traditional government and actions with elective ones.

cigarettes. The pro-gambling forces have succeeded in infiltrating both elective councils on the U.S. and Canadian sides, thus isolating the Mohawk Nation Council of Chiefs. Furthermore, the traditionalist pro-gambling forces have succeeded in paralysing the traditional process of raising condoled chiefs, so that the Mohawk Nation Council at Akwesasne is now without condoled chiefs — many of them having recently died and not been replaced — and has to rely directly on the Six Nations Confederacy Chiefs and those that the latter delegate to represent the Confederacy, until such time as it is able to return to the traditional norms of local government.<sup>29</sup>

In the meantime, some of the peaceful traditionalists most involved in the resistance to warriors and gambling — and most seriously attacked and reviled by them — have decided to move out of this impossible situation and return to the Mohawk valley (see Ch. 3, p. 81-82) in order to safeguard and build a strong traditional nucleus. Others — like the traditionalists in the Council of Akwesasne, or at the newly formed Nation Office of the Mohawk Nation Council — are doing what they can to allow the whole community of Akwesasne to express itself freely, to build new institutions in keeping with traditional principles of government, or to maintain the existing traditional local institutions and practises with the approval of the traditional Six Nations Confederacy.

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29. As we write these lines, there is talk of a condolence ceremony to take place soon, when the time is ripe.

## The Community of Ohswekan (Grand River)

### Background

As detailed earlier, the Six Nations Confederacy, and hence the Mohawk Nation, remained neutral during the Revolutionary War between the British and the Americans. Some Iroquois individuals, however, did take sides. Some fought with the Americans against the British, while others, led by Mohawk firebrand Joseph Brant, fought with the British against the Americans.

The British lost the war. At the Paris Treaty of 1783, they acted as if they owned Indian lands, and wrongfully "ceded" Six Nations lands to the U.S. The Iroquois were angry. Joseph Brant immediately went to see John Haldimand, then governor of Canada, and demanded lands in upper Canada equivalent to the Six Nations lands which the British had wrongfully "ceded" to the U.S. The governor at first suggested lands near Lachine Rapids. Brant did not like the offer, and the Senecas objected as well. After further investigation, he decided on the Grand River country. Not only did it remind him of the Mohawk River but it was closer to the Senecas, and was land which had been taken from the Neutrals in 1650 — presently, however, in the hands of the Missisaugas (Ojibways). The Missisaugas were open to the deal, and Haldimand had already planned to buy that land from them for the Crown and for loyalists and other White settlers. Brant was given first choice, because of his loyalty to the English. He asked for six miles on each side of the river, but he insisted it should be granted to the Six Nations in gratitude, not as subjects but as allies of the Crown. On October 23, 1784, the grant was officially signed. Grand River lay in the valley between Lake Ontario and Lake Erie.

As early as 1785, the Grand River Settlement Indians numbered over 1800, including members from all six nations of the Confederacy as well as small groups from allied nations: Mohawk, 464; Cayuga, 381; Onondaga, 245; Tuscarora, 129; Oneida, 162; Seneca, 78; Delaware, 231; Nanticoke, 11; Tutelo, 74; Other, 68. Total: 1843.

Joseph Brant and his Iroquois settled in Grand River country, but many other Iroquois also did, including Confederacy chiefs who still remained neutral. They moved, not out of belief in the British or in Joseph Brant, but simply because the place was safer. Most of the principal chiefs of the major Mohawk villages came to Grand River, so that the fire of the Mohawk Nation was now at Grand River. But half of the Six Nations still lived in the U.S.: 1700 Senecas, 600 Oneidas, and some 200 Mohawks settled in the Bay of Quinte (at Tyendinaga, as we shall see below).

Shortly after their arrival, the chiefs re-established the Confederacy by relighting the Council fires in the village of the Onondagas. The Confederacy, on the American side, also continued. For a time there was some confusion as to where the Great Council Fire of the Six Nations actually was, since the Onondaga village on the American side existed no longer. The principal chiefs on the American side claimed the Fire was at Buffalo Creek, while Brant and other Iroquois at Grand River claimed that it was at the new Onondaga village in Grand River country.

In 1803, the New York Chiefs deposed Joseph Brant and a few members of the League Council who resided in Canada and replaced them by New York residents. Grand River refused to abide by this action. Result: a separation. There would be two central grand Council fires, one at Onondaga (on the U.S. side, after the removal of the Buffalo Creek fire), and one at Ohswekan, on the Grand River in Canada. The two Confederacies split the wampums. Ultimately the two distinct Confederacies remained, but both agreed that the original Fire has always been and still remains at Onondaga, on the American side. Today, the two act together as one mind, and as one Confederacy.

The Nations settled side-by-side on both sides of Grand River; the Mohawks up north near Brantford, the Tuscaroras and Onondagas southeast of them, the Oneidas and Senecas southeast of the latter and the Cayugas southeast of the latter. The Council of the Six Nations met regularly in Ohswekan, the village at the geographical and political centre of the township of Tuscarora.

### Lands

Brant assigned lands to Indians and White friends alike. Infiltration of Whites into the Mohawk settlement of Brantford began as early as 1805. He sold or leased parcels to Whites with the intention of giving the money to the Senecas who had remained in New York. Speculators showed up, asking him to sell half of the Crown land. He was stopped by the Canadian government, which declared that the land belongs to the Six Nations, if they inhabit it. Haldimand had given licence of occupation only. Finally the Canadian government said that it held final rights to all the lands of the Six Nations. All lands were in the custody of the government. All land transactions required the Crown's approval. The Government created the Six Nations Reservation to segregate them completely from the Whites.

The Grand River Iroquois clung tenaciously to Iroquois traditions and have always asserted a strong sense of independence. In 1886, they built a house to hold their councils. We have already spoken of the Cayuga patriot and statesman Deskaheh, and also of how the RCMP invaded the Confederacy offices in Grand River in 1921 when the Canadian Indian agent, with a score of RCMP officers in tow, tried to dissolve the Iroquois Confederacy. In fact, as specified earlier, an elective ("democratic") form of government was set up under the Canadian Indian Act, which made the Confederacy even more assertive of their traditions. Elected chiefs did occupy the Council building for a number of years, but in 1970 traditionalists succeeded in occupying it again. In 1973 the

Supreme Court of Ontario recognized the legitimacy of this occupation by traditional chiefs, when the elected council had tried to exclude the traditional chiefs from using the building to hold their meetings. The Six Nations Confederacy at Ohswekan still stands strong, along with its traditional government, which works in unison with the Six Nations Confederacy at Onondaga (on the U.S. side). Both have managed to keep their independence from Canada and the U.S., all the while remaining loyal to their friendship alliances with both, despite all the usual betrayals on the part of the U.S. and of Canada. Today, the Great Law of Peace is being publicly read, with a growing participation of Natives and non-Natives alike. Another Cayuga, the elder Jake Thomas, has become one of the leading and most respected traditional figures in the Six Nations Confederacy, because of his knowledge of Iroquois languages, his capacity to recite the entire Great Law of Peace in several Iroquois tongues, and his deep knowledge of Iroquois traditions.

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## The Community of Tyendinaga

### Background

The general background as to the origins of the settlement of Tyendinaga is similar to that of Grand River.

Mohawk captain John Deseronto and his Mohawks also fought for the British during the American War of Independence. While Joseph Brant's Mohawks came from the village of Canajoharie in the Mohawk Valley and conducted raids from Niagara, Captain John's Mohawks came from the Fort Hunter region of the Mohawk Valley, and had operated during the Revolution from Lachine, near Montréal.

During the Haldimand negotiations for land grants in upper Canada, Captain John's Mohawks had tried to join the Caughnawagas, but Haldimand resisted, possibly because the Caughnawagas were suspect during the war. He preferred that John's Mohawks join Brant in the Grand River region. They refused. They preferred the Bay of Quinte region, northeast of Lake Ontario. Haldimand did provide the land for them and, in May 1784, about a hundred Mohawks moved to what would become known as the Tyendinaga tract. They were greeted by a great number of Missisaugas who were glad to see them.

### Land

Originally, the tract contained about 1,000 acres of land. Then, in 1793, 92,700 acres were added — lands that could only be sold to the Crown, according to the government of Upper Canada. This condition was accepted by the Tyendinaga Mohawks. From the beginning, they pursued a course of action independent of the Grand River Iroquois. They tended rather to their own reserve, which in the early years received considerable assistance from the government. Eventually, the tract was pressed by encroaching White settlement, and through a series of land surrenders — the major ones occurring in 1820 and 1835 — it was reduced to its present 17,448 acres.

### Keeping the Traditional Ways

In spite of much acculturation, the Tyendinaga community retained a certain Indian and Mohawk distinctiveness. In 1888, when the Canadian

Government tried to substitute an elective system for their traditional way of government, they twice wrote to the Governor General stating that they had decided, by a very large majority, to continue the system of hereditary chiefs according to the manner and custom of their forefathers, and to reject the elective system. They reminded the government of the Covenant Chain of Peace and assured the British Crown of their loyalty to it, as well as to the treaties sealed in blood. Finding this petition rejected, they sent a delegation in 1889 with a new petition signed by the men who had been selected by the Clan Mothers to perform the duties of Peace. (See the text of this Petition, and of their last Letter, in Ch. 3, p. 69.)

In 1983, the Tyendinaga Band Council, along with those of Akwesasne and Kahnawake, signed the document which proclaimed that they had contacted the Six Nations Confederacy Chiefs and were returning gradually to their traditional form of government, based on the Great Law of Peace. (See *Akwesasne Notes* 17 (5): 9-10.)

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## The Community of Watha<sup>30</sup> (Gibson, Ontario)

### Origins

On October 22, 1881, eleven families, mostly Mohawk,<sup>31</sup> set off from Kanesatake with all their belongings on the steamer Dagmar, bound for a new life on 28,000 acres of recently purchased lands in the Muskoka region of the township of Gibson, Ontario.

The decision to move was sparked by a number of things: false accusations that the Mohawks had set fire to the Sulpician Catholic Church and Rectory in Kanesatake, the ensuing trials of 1877-1880, the burning of the Methodist church built by Louis Sahanatien in Kanesatake, the armed standoff with the RCMP, continuing land tensions between Whites and Natives, Sulpician paternalism, tensions between French and English, Catholics and Methodists, the Mohawk passion for independence from both Church and government, a desire to return to nature...

As a result of all this, some Mohawks had had enough. Chiefs Louis Sahanatien, Joseph Onassakenrat, Lazare Reunee, Peter Decaire, Antoine Dewasha, and Peter and Xavier Laforce met in council with others and decided to petition Ottawa that those who so desired be permitted to leave Kanesatake and form a new community elsewhere. The Sulpicians at the time were quite ready to be rid of some of their Indian wards; some 44 families were supposed to have been picked out to leave.

The government suggested a choice of three areas. The Muskoka location seemed to appeal most to the Chiefs and, at the suggestion of Ottawa, Chiefs Sahanatien, N. Commandant and P. Decaire went to inspect what is now the Watha Reserve. The property was purchased by the Federal Government from the Ontario government.<sup>32</sup> The Watha Iroquois feel however, that they actually

30. The reserve is called Watha because of the large number of maple trees on it. This is its original name. It was also called Sahanaja or the Sahanatien settlement, its first chief being Louis Sahanatien. Later it was also called Gibson.

31. A few were Algonquin and Micmac.

32. Ottawa took back 10,000 acres in 1918, and gave these to the Ontario government, because fewer families than expected had moved from Québec. In 1981, a Mohawk land claim was filed for these 10,000 acres of land.

have title to it. This entitlement has however not as yet been legally reinstated, according to Ottawa.

Of the original group who came, three families were Roman Catholic. This suggests that the Mohawks did not come to Watha entirely because they were Methodists. Some of them came from Cornwall Island (Ontario), after having already left Kanesatake for Cornwall in the Spring of 1877.

Other Mohawks from Kanesatake followed later. But most stayed in Kanesatake even if some non-Mohawks encouraged them to leave. Some of the Watha Mohawks later returned to Kanesatake. The first chief at Watha was Louis Sahanatien, also known as Kan-er-ha-ken-ià:te (topmost branch of the tree).. He was half-French and half-Mohawk and, though once Catholic, had become Methodist during the hostilities with the Sulpicians.<sup>33</sup>

### 1882-1993 A brief overview

It must be remembered that despite the fact that most of the Kanesatake and Watha Mohawks were at the time outwardly Christian (Catholic or Methodist), their primary loyalty was to the Mohawk Nation and the Six Nations Confederacy. In 1881, the Life Chief system was still in operation. Community consensus was still the basis of any chief's authority.

In 1882, a school was built. In 1887, the first church. The elective system was forced on them in the 1890's. In 1897 a Mission house was built, with missionary teachers regularly supplied by the Methodist and United Churches until the 1960s.<sup>34</sup>

Neither the Mohawk religion nor cultural customs were incorporated in the church or the school. Older members recall that when they went to school, they would be strapped if they spoke their own language. In 1950 the school was closed on the reserve and the children attended nearby schools instead. In 1958, they began to attend public schools in the area. There has been a great deal of intermarriage between Whites and Mohawks. The work of settlement and survival was heavy in the beginning. They gradually got into logging and farming until these became economically impractical. Since 1972, however, they have succeeded in establishing a well-organized and prosperous 30-acre cranberry-growing business. Members of the community are proud of those who live off the reserve and have "made it." Encouragement to return is directed only towards reunions and social occasions.

33. One of the major ways for the Mohawks of Kanesatake to enforce their land claims was to adopt the religion of the British; between 1868 and 1881, two-thirds of the Native people at Kanesatake had become Protestant. Most of them were Mohawks.

34. The Mission is now under the United Church, but scarcely anyone frequents it. There are at present only a handful of active members. It is no longer a meaningful source of inspiration and support for the residents.

There is no question that all this has deeply affected the traditional ways of the Mohawks. In order to keep peace with the Churches, the Canadian and Ontario governments, and the White people of the area, much of the public traditional life disappeared. The ceremonies dwindled, as did the Mohawk language, the clan system, and the traditional political system of Life Chiefs. Even traditional social dances and songs disappeared.

Whatever did remain went underground. Traditional medicines and naming ceremonies, for instance, went on in this way. Some elders continued some practises on their own, but the children were increasingly acculturated to the mainstream culture.

In spite of all this, the barter system and kin relationships continued with the Grand River Iroquois, where many found work. Adam White (who died in the mid 1960s) was well versed in the treaties and did contest the Indian Act, reminding English royalty of its treaty agreements with the Haudenosaunee. Families occasionally accorded importance to traditional clothing, so that children could find pride at least in that part of their heritage. But the Mohawks in Watha were not part of the Iroquois renaissance going on in other Mohawk communities during the 1920s, 1940s, and 1960s.

In 1975, however, five or six young Watha Mohawk went to Manitou College (Quebec), where their pride in their cultural identity was somewhat brought back to them. But 1975-80 was the building boom in Watha. People were more interested in driving bulldozers than in making moccasins. Nothing much happened.

In 1985, a crisis occurred in education, with cuts in post-secondary funding. There were marches on Parliament Hill. In 1987, an awakening took place, thanks to the Ojibway who lit the sacred fire in protest. They also lit the Fire in Watha. The Oneidas helped. The Thanksgiving Address, the tobacco, and the songs came back. The Watha people saw visions within the sacred fire. The eyes of the Firekeepers were opened. The spirits of the ancestors were lifted; all creation was awakened. The elders were rediscovered, and their silent resistance all these years at last appreciated. The elders spoke, and the young people listened.<sup>35</sup>

Since 1991, some 15 Mohawks from the Watha community have traced back the White Roots of Peace and have asked to have a seat under the Great Tree of Peace. They were reinstated, reaffirmed and adopted within the Circle of the Confederacy, through the Kanesatake Longhouse and its entitled chief Samson Gabriel. They now participate regularly in traditional ceremonies at the Kanesatake and Kahnawake-by-the-Mohawk-Trail Longhouses. They are building a Longhouse in Watha. In 1991, Watha Band Council leaders, along with other Band Council leaders from other Mohawk communities, had a meeting with delegates of the Six Nations Confederacy at Onondaga, with a view to returning to the traditional Haudenosaunee government and ways. Today 50 of the Watha community members are fluent speakers of Mohawk.

35. From the author's interview with Terry and Lucia Sahanatien, at Montreal, July 1993.

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### The Community of Ganienkeh (near Altona, N.Y.)

This community, an offshoot of Kahnawake which has from the beginning always called itself Ganienkeh, was established in 1974 at Moss Lake in the Adirondacks. It moved to Altona, N.Y. (nearer to Kahnawake) in 1977, where it is presently located. Louis Hall, one of its elder founders, has called it "a Warrior Society project."

#### Background

In the wake of the new spiritual and cultural assertiveness of the Mohawks, especially since the construction of the St. Lawrence Seaway and its devastating effects on the various communities, some became increasingly militant not only in proclaiming but also in doing something about their national sovereignty, their border rights, and the recovery of their stolen lands. In Kahnawake, a group of young Mohawk militants formed in 1968 a *Mohawk singing society* to rebuild the fighting spirit of the Mohawk Nation and to bring back its former glory. Over the next few years, it evolved — with the help of Louis Hall — into the Mohawk Warrior Society (see the further story, p. 44).

In 1973, after having received official Longhouse approval for their organisation, they began a campaign to evict non-Native settlers in Kahnawake. The conflict turned into a pitched battle with the Québec police, and an armed siege at the Kahnawake Longhouse.

After lengthy discussion in the weeks following the siege, the Longhouse at Kahnawake approved a secret plan to repossess a parcel of land in traditional Mohawk "territory." During the Winter of 1973-74, the Warriors planned their strategy.

#### Ganienkeh at Moss Lake: 1974-1977

On May 13, 1974, about eighty traditionalist Mohawks (including women and children) — mainly from Kahnawake, but also from Akwesasne and Tyendinaga — left Akwesasne quietly in the middle of the night, and occupied 612 acres of their traditional land near Moss Lake in the Adirondacks of upper New York State, land that had recently been purchased by the State. They issued a manifesto declaring that they were repossessing a small part of their

ancient homeland and that they would "live off the land" in a co-operative farming economy. The territory would be called Ganienkeh.<sup>36</sup>

On the first day of the occupation, a pair of Forest Rangers arrived at the gate. When they tried to enter, they were met by 30 warriors with shotguns and high-powered rifles. The Rangers quickly retreated. All the Mohawk men had guns. Some local residents resented the new community and, on several occasions, drove past and fired shots into the Mohawk encampment. Finally, on Oct. 28, 1974, the Mohawks returned the gunfire and two Whites were injured, including a nine-year-old girl. The police insisted on entering to investigate, but the Mohawks refused. An armed standoff ensued. Hundreds of Indian veterans of the 1973 Wounded Knee siege rushed over to defend the community. An AIM member and Vietnam War veteran called "Cartoon" taught the warriors how to conduct a military patrol, dig foxholes, and so on. He taught the warriors how to kill like commandos. In short, he made soldiers out of them. Even the Mohawk children were given military training. Within a few years, they acquired their first semi-automatic weapons, AK-47s.

The community built their Longhouses and started farming, but the land at Moss Lake was too rocky to allow much farming. Eventually, the Mohawks entered into negotiations with New York State officials. In May, 1977, an agreement was reached. The Mohawks agreed to abandon Moss Lake in exchange for two parcels of land — 5,700 acres and a lake, in Clinton County near the town of Altona, N.Y., just south of the Canadian border.

#### Ganienkeh at Altona: 1977 to the present

The new land was much better. It was arranged through the Turtle Island Trust, which later acquired neighbouring farm lands in turn restituted to the Ganienkeh Nation.

The community has, since its founding, been formed of 100% traditionalists who claim to follow their traditional form of government. There is no Band Council or elective system. Their policy is neither to solicit, nor accept grants or services of welfare from New York State or the Federal government. Alcohol and drugs are strictly prohibited in the confines of the settlement.

As the situation in Ganienkeh began to stabilize, the Warrior Society was relatively quiet until an armed conflict erupted in Akwesasne at Raquette Point, in 1978, as noted earlier. Tensions began between the Ganienkeh community, on the one hand, and the Mohawk Nation Council, the Six Nations Confederacy at Onondaga, and members of the Kahnawake Longhouse on the other hand, all of whom were critical of Ganienkeh's tactics of militancy.

36. The community was approved by the Kahnawake and Akwesasne Longhouses and in Oct. 26, 1974 by Onondaga. But the project was later condemned by some traditionalists, notably by Chief Jos Philip in Kahnawake and his followers.

In 1983-84, one of the leading community spokesmen, Louis Hall, wrote a number of tracts, e.g., "What is the Warrior Society?" and "The Warrior Manifesto." He called for a Ganienkeh Republic, the abolition of all current Indian governments, the rebuilding of the Iroquois Confederacy on the basis of sovereignty and power, the use of bingos, and "bargaining power."

As the cigarette contraband grew in Kahnawake and Akwesasne, we find the Warrior society better and better armed, and becoming more pushy (in the name of organized self-defence and sovereignty), not only in Kahnawake but in other Mohawk and Iroquois communities where it joined with other local militant activists into a Warrior Movement.

Ganienkeh, the seat of the Warrior Society and movement, has felt that the Mohawk (and Iroquois) defence had to be organized throughout the Nation and Confederacy. In this, it took the initiative. For security reasons, this community does not release information concerning the names and numbers of people in the community. It does not allow unknown and untrusted non-Indian people to enter the community precincts... always for reasons of "security." The people at Ganienkeh have close links with the Kahnawake pro-Warrior Longhouse and its Nation office, and also with the MSSF in Akwesasne, not to mention warrior groups across the Confederacy.

In spite of increasing Mohawk and Confederacy criticism of both the actions and declarations of some of its Warrior society members,<sup>37</sup> Ganienkeh claims never to have broken away from the Confederacy.

In addition, Ganienkeh claims always to have kept to its original aim of being a self-reliant community. In Altona it started with farming, raising crops and animals. It set up a saw mill which employed people and also developed a good maple syrup business, which however petered out due to outside pollution. It has a garage where repairs are done on tractors, etc. The farming was kept on hold for a couple of years in order to set up a Super Bingo in 1989. Recently, farming has resumed and a laundromat has been opened. Ganienkeh has its own community school and building. It stocks its ponds with fish.

Today, it is difficult to get much more information concerning this community. It protects itself in a shroud of secrecy. For "security" reasons...

37. Some have gone so far as to call publicly for the removal and even assassination of the actual Six Nations Confederacy leaders, as traitors to the Nation.

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## War, Warriors and the Dynamics of Peace<sup>38</sup>

One must be very careful in using the words "war," "warfare" and "warriors" in connection with Iroquoian/Mohawk culture. One faces a radically different cultural world. These very words do not in fact exist in their languages, and what does exist there has little if anything to do with what falls under Western headings of war, warfare, and warriors. (See Ch. 3, pp. 9 ss.)

This is not to say there were no conflicts, no fights, no battles, no self-defence and/or attack activities between Mohawks and other Nations (Native or European). But it is most important to understand the unique cultural nature of these activities, whose spirit endures to this very day, and to give their rightful due to those the Mohawks call the *Rotiskenrake:te?*, i.e., the men whose duty it has been to protect the Nation and the Six Nations Confederacy. We shall do this under title I: *From Endurance Games to Mourning "Wars" and Adoption of Captives*. The *Rotiskenrake:te?*.

Nor is this to say that, after the arrival of Europeans, many Mohawks did not speak — in French and English — about war, war chiefs and warriors, practise warrior-type activities, and even start a Warrior Society. But it is important to understand the origins and nature of all this, as well as its relationship to the Mohawk dynamics of peace. This is what we shall do under Title II: *Origins and Nature of the Mohawk Warriors and Warrior Society*.

### I - From Endurance Games to Mourning "Wars" and Adoption of Captives. The *Rotiskenrake:te?*

First, Iroquoians — because of their philosophy — did not fight either for "territory," territorial gains, political sovereignty (in the sense of dominance over other peoples), or for consumer goods, profit, commercial advantage, or to convert or even integrate other peoples into their own culture or way of life. Even today, as noted in Chapter 3, the very word "subject" is not part of their vocabulary.

Second, their economy was a blend of hunting and agriculture; the women did the farming while the men did the hunting. Hunting required the ability to endure hardship without complaining about long distances or long absences, it meant overcoming the cold, unforeseen dangers, and obstacles of every sort, all for the benefit of their kinspeople. In this they found their place in society and their pride. Naturally, the men sought every opportunity to test their

38. See F. Jennings, *The Invasion of America* (New York/London, W. W. Norton & Co) 1918, especially pp. 146-171; I.T. Kelsey, *Joseph Brant* (New York, Syracuse Press) 1986, pp. 21-22; B. Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic* (McGill, Queen 1976) Vol. I, pp. 68 ss., 145-147, etc.

courage and endurance. Thus they created games of physical and moral endurance among one another and between tribes. They freely underwent trials of hardship, suffering, pain and torment akin to torture, precisely to test and prove their courage. They would hold burning sticks against their bodies, for instance, until the flesh was burned, and so on.

Third, these hunters, providers and protectors were called *Rotiskenrake:te?*, meaning the braves, the young men, the hunters (*ke:te* means "to carry something attached to their body," like charms or medicine bags for hunting, etc.). Now since social prestige, at least for these young men, came to them through their acts of selfless bravery, they could — in their efforts to prove themselves — inflict accidental harm. Conflicts could arise which resulted in serious injury or even the death of some individual. In such a case, the tribe whose member(s) had been injured or killed by an alien was morally obliged — in order to maintain the social equilibrium of the kinship unit — to injure, kill or capture/adopt one or more members of the other tribe. Generally this was done through the women, who were entitled to demand publicly that a murdered kinsman/kinswoman be replaced by a captive whom the bereaved women might either adopt — to fill the departed person's place — or consign to torture and death in a ceremonial way. Thus arose the custom of "mourning wars." This was not "revenge," properly speaking, but "justified reprisal," i.e., a means of re-establishing the validity of violated customs.<sup>39</sup>

Fourth, there never were "wars" for the extermination of another tribe. The "war" would stop after a few dead or injured on both sides. The high point was to capture an enemy. Furthermore, they would not kill any women. Only men. They also refrained from systematic destruction of food and property, at least until such practises by Europeans roused some to reprisals in kind (Jennings, p. 153).

Fifth, the Iroquois idea of courage was very different from that of the White man. Though he might risk his life to rescue a wounded comrade, he would not stand and fight to the last warrior. The warrior always proceeded upon the theory that he who fights and runs away may live to fight another day. Even when winning, the Iroquois preferred to fight once and then go home. The loss of only one man of his party obliged him to return and condole with the bereaved relations. Nothing of the least importance could be done by the sorrowing family until the condolence had taken place.

Sixth, while the Celts from Europe would chop off an enemy's head as a trophy, the Iroquois scalped. "Scalps were ordinarily taken from persons thought to be dead. No cruelty was intended. The part removed was not large. An enemy's scalp placed in a small loop, dried and painted red around the edge, was treasured by the warrior for years. It was not only proof of prowess in battle, it was also a friendly gift for a family who had lately lost a loved one. Though the family preferred a prisoner whom they could adopt, they would take the memento with many thanks and hang it up on the cross pole of their hut. It became a constant reminder of the departed." (Kelsey, pp. 21-22)

39. F. Jennings *op. cit.* p. 158-159.

Seventh, their prisoners became part of the family and Nation to replace the departed ones. There were no jails or prison camps for them as in the West.

Eighth, while there was torture, both in Europe and Native America, Trigger brings out the ceremonial and ritual aspect in the case of some prisoners tortured to death, where the body of the courageous one could be, at times, eaten to acquire his courage. This custom, so foreign to Algonkian tribes (and which was eventually to disappear), may have given rise to the nickname of Mohawk as man-eater,<sup>40</sup> and was certainly used by the young braves as a psychological fear tactic in their later battles against their enemies, who were often terrified by such a reputation.

This is not to say that after the Great Peace and before the coming of the Europeans, there were no individual abuses or occasional returns to former non-peaceful practices. After the coming of the Europeans, many *Rotiskenrake:te?* — never the chiefs in their chiefly function — did fight back, even with firearms, to protect their peoples when attacked or during occasional raids. Some even picked up various Western practises of warfare and took to calling themselves warriors, as we shall see further on. But the role of the *Rotiskenrake:te?* has always been and remains one of protecting — not so much with guns as with a good mind and peaceful resistance, exceptions notwithstanding. The entitled chiefs have always restrained, and still try to restrain through peaceful means, any who do not abide by the Great Peace.

## II Origins and Nature of the Mohawk Warriors and Warrior Society.

The word "warrior" was first applied to the Iroquois and other Native combatants by the Europeans — the Dutch, French and English. Europeans had long understood armed conflict to be part of the natural order of existence. It was an immemorial European tradition to speak about wars, warfare, warriors and to contrast civilized war with savage war. Civilized war is the kind *we* — rational, honourable, decent, civilised — beings, wage against *them* (in this case, the Indians), whereas savage war is the vengeful, violent, atrocious, irrational, unchecked, sadistic kind that they wage against us. They, of course, were these backward, primitive, wild savages and pagans not yet blessed with civilisation and knowledge of the Gospel. As has been said so eloquently by Ziauddin Sardar: "The concept of the wild man was central to medieval thought and European humanists about civilisation. At the time of discovery, the Natives were immediately seen as savage naked beasts, a lurking menace on the borders of the civilized world. They had overtones of bestiality and demonism... that merged with witchcraft. Europe needed cannibals... It invented them."<sup>41</sup> Small wonder that they started defining all Natives — and especially

40. On this and a dissenting opinion, see F. Jennings *op. cit.* p. 161, note 52.

41. Ziauddin Sardar, "When Dracula Meets the 'Other': Europe, Columbus, and the Colombian Legacy," in *Alternatives*, Vol. 17, No. 4, Fall 1992, pp. 493-517.

the Iroquois — as warriors,<sup>42</sup> and furthermore as fierce, destructive, irrational warriors who not only exterminated but tortured their victims in the most brutal and demonic fashion.<sup>43</sup> The mythological imagery has survived to this day, as the film *Black Robe* blatantly attests, and still evokes great fear.

Many Mohawk *Rotiskenrake:te?*, in protecting their people, have often used this unfounded fear that Europeans had of them as a psychological weapon. In the Western context, moreover, the European word warrior also carried the positive connotation of valour, bravery, which in some ways connects with the qualities of moral and physical endurance, courage, and effective protection required of the *Rotiskenrake:te?*. So they accepted being called warriors and even referred to themselves as warriors when speaking European languages. Some of them started talking about "War Chiefs" and "the Iroquois Empire," and began to believe that they were indeed the fiercest, most fearless of warriors. Many played the game... and got caught in it.

I think we might date the origin of the Mohawk warriors and the Warrior movement to Mohawk firebrand Joseph Brant (1743-1807) who decided, quite on his own, to break away from the long Iroquois Confederacy policy of neutrality in the wars between Europeans, and sided with the British against the Americans in the War of Independence. He started recruiting Mohawk warriors to fight in a European confrontation of conquest and territorial gain. Whatever the validity of his ultimate motives, he and his followers did not keep to the policy of peace and neutrality set by the Confederacy and its communities. He set himself up as representative of the Mohawk Nation and of the Six Nations Confederacy, bypassing the authority of the entitled chiefs and *Rotiianeson* and their policy of peace. His action was to have a crucial and deleterious impact, not only on the relationship between the Confederacy and the U.S.A., but also on the internal relations between members of the Confederacy and of the Mohawk Nation itself where it created all sorts of havoc and divisions, some of which persist down to our own day.

The Warrior movement was further strengthened when warriors succeeded in introducing the warrior mentality and the language of war, warriors, and war-chiefs into the first written English version of the Great Law of Peace in the 1920s, called the Parker version. This version, which was widely circulated, gave ultimately a distorted version of the original oral tradition of the Great Law of Peace. It is only recently, in 1989, that a revised English version was made by elder and chief Jake Thomas, which corrects the first one, saying that there never were War Chiefs and Warriors and Warrior Societies in the Great Law of Peace. All that had long ago been buried forever beneath the Great Tree of Peace...

42. For example, it was customary among Europeans to number the inhabitants of an Indian settlement by referring to the number of warriors.

43. The Europeans thus gave the Iroquois the reputation of being the most militaristic, powerful, fierce, conquest-bent, and dangerous of Indian warriors, describing them as the Romans of North America who had built an Empire from the St. Lawrence to Virginia, etc.

The Parker version has been the Bible of that recent variant of the Warrior movement, the "Warriors" familiar from media images who have been coming to the fore ever since the new political and spiritual assertiveness among Mohawks and the Six Nation Confederacy began in the 1950s (as outlined in Ch. 3, p. 74). All the more so since the highly militant and confrontational American Indian Movement (which started in 1968) has encouraged and backed much of the recent Mohawk and Iroquois Warrior movement and Society.

### "The Warrior Society"

What is today known as the "Warrior society" started in Kahnawake, in 1968, as a Singing Society of young Mohawk militants, determined to rebuild the fighting spirit of the Mohawk Nation and to bring back its former glory. Over the next few years, it evolved into the Mohawk Warrior Society. There were seven young men, including Paul Delaronde who emerged as the strongest activist in the cultural and political revival at Kahnawake. By the late 1960s, they were already calling themselves the Warriors. Soon they decided to describe themselves as the Warrior Society.

Weapons were not, however, a significant part of this Warrior movement in the early days. The earliest incidents were relatively peaceful.<sup>44</sup> "It was more a cultural movement for survival in those days," recalls Mike Mitchell (p. 182). In the Spring of 1970, for instance, they successfully helped a group of activists in Akwesasne reclaim two islands — Stanley and Loon Islands — in the St. Lawrence River. Their reputation grew. They received pleas for help from other Iroquois communities. For example, in the summer of 1971, the Onondagas called on them to help stop New York State authorities' expansion of Highway 81, south of Syracuse.

As the Warrior Society continued to gain strength, some of the entitled chiefs began to resent aspects of their style of action. In 1972, when one of the older chiefs complained about their conduct, the Warriors went to the Kahnawake Longhouse to get official approval for their organisation — which they received.

In 1973, the Warrior Society engaged in their first pitched battle with the Québec police. The conflict, which began as an eviction campaign of non-native settlers in Kahnawake, turned into an armed siege at the Kahnawake Longhouse, and brought the Warrior Society to the attention of the mainstream media for the first time. Six members of the AIM movement joined them in the eviction campaign. Kahnawake had become an armed camp.

In 1974, again with Longhouse approval, the Warriors were actively involved in repossessing a parcel of land in the traditional Mohawk territory of the Adirondacks. The Ganiienkeh settlement was born — "a Warrior Society pro-

44. For example, the International Bridge blockade at Akwesasne in 1968. At that time, they were deeply inspired by Standing Arrow.

ject," claimed Louis Hall.<sup>45</sup> Within a few years, they acquired their first semi-automatic weapons, the infamous AK-47s, which they carried during the 1979 Racquette Point Siege of Akwesasne by New York State Police.

In 1983-4, Louis Hall wrote and promulgated several incendiary tracts: *What is the Warrior Society?* / *The Warrior Manifesto* / *Calls for Bingos / Republic* / *Abolition of Current Indian Governments* / *Rebuilding the Iroquois Confederacy* / *Bargaining Power*. The gist is clear from the titles.

As the contraband cigarette trade and super-bingos began in 1986, the Warrior Society became well-armed and well-trained. It began to intimidate and threaten all those who opposed the illegal cigarette trade and the gambling activities in Mohawk communities.<sup>46</sup> Some of the Longhouse people backed them up in these new and more active profit-making activities and in their criticism of the entitled chiefs of the Six Nations Confederacy who, with many of the Iroquois people, did not support this type of economic activity and muscle-bound militancy. The Warriors, accordingly, not only became critical of the Mohawk Nation Council Chiefs at Akwesasne and the entitled chiefs of the Six Nations Confederacy at Onondaga, but accused them of treason to the Nation and to the Confederacy. This is when they began designating themselves as leaders and holders of titles and speaking in the name of the Mohawk Nation and of the Confederacy, without having been delegated to do so by the actual holders of those titles. They even raised weapons against their own people, disrupted sacred ceremonies and Grand Council meetings, threatened the lives of Chiefs<sup>47</sup> and Clan Mothers, engaged in seditious acts aimed at discrediting and overthrowing the Mohawk Nation government, even going so far as to illegally use Six Nations Confederacy letterhead to pursue their purposes. It all finally came to a head in their armed resistance and blockade of the Mercier bridge during the Oka crisis (August - October, 1990).

From the outset, many traditional national leaders had looked askance at the aggressive style of the Warrior Society. But it was only in the mid-1980s and 1990s that the designated national leaders, both at the Mohawk Nation level and at the Six Nations Confederacy, publicly expressed their disapproval of some of these activities, especially those connected with contraband cigarettes and fuel, gambling, super-bingo, casino activities etc. Here is a brief overview.

In 1986, the Mohawk Nation Council at Akwesasne passed tobacco laws making the unregulated importation of cigarettes into its territories illegal (*Akwesasne Notes*, 1988, vol. 20). This injunction was backed by the

45. See The Ganiienkeh Community. See Ch. III p. 74.

46. In 1989, the MSSF (Mohawk Sovereign Security Force) — a non-community backed group — was formed in Akwesasne, which was closely related to the Warrior Society and worked in collaboration with it. But it was denied recognition this time by the Iroquois government. (See *Akwesasne Notes*, Vol. 21 #6, p. 14.)

47. See, for example, the "hit-list" and public statements by L. Hall -- never retracted.

Onondaga Council of Chiefs<sup>48</sup> It turned down the Loran Thompson bingo-jack idea and the Clan Mothers' letter of support for it (*Indian Time*, 1/2/87, p. 1).

On August 20, 1988, the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy (Grand River) wrote to the Mohawk Nation Council of Chiefs at Akwesasne, asking that any group wishing to be heard at Grand River be represented by a condoled chief, and declaring that people who persist in purchasing large quantities of cigarettes and selling tax-free items to non-Indians, such as bingo games, have put themselves outside the sacred Covenant Circle and may leave themselves open to the laws of a foreign nation. Those who go outside the Circle, said the Confederacy, leave behind clans, laws, and ceremonies, and cease to exist.

On the same date, the Confederacy wrote to the Prime Minister of Canada to say that "there is no Warrior Society" in the Iroquois Confederacy at Grand River (confirmed by a reading of the *Kayaneren:kowa* on August 7-10, 1988). It also reiterated the content of the Letter to the Mohawk nation Council of Chiefs at Akwesasne.

On May 16, 1989, the Mohawk Nation Council at Akwesasne asked President Bush to remove gambling devices from St. Regis, invoking a 1794 Treaty that allows the Iroquois to invite the Government onto a reservation to remove non-Indians or to halt criminal activity. New York State Police raids followed in June and July. People were arrested. Police sealed off the reservation to outsiders. The Warriors, in turn, set up their own roadblocks. State Police roadblocks were taken down on October 9, 1989.

On November 13, 1989, the Mohawk Nation Council of Chiefs issued a press release saying that pro-casino people are no longer citizens of the Mohawk Nation (*Akwesasne Notes*, Fall 1989, Vol. 21, 4, p. 8).

In December 1989, the Seneca nation declared its support for the Mohawks Chiefs, and the Onondaga Council of Chiefs issued a communiqué condemning both gambling casinos and the Warriors (*Akwesasne Notes*, Vol. 21, #5 and 6).

In January, a Mohawk Nation Position Paper is issued. (The anti-gambling forces set up a roadblock on March 23, 1990).

On March 27, 1990, the Six Nations Confederacy at Onondaga issued a communiqué, signed by Todahoaho, chief Shenandoah, stating: "Anyone raising weapons against their own people is breaking the first principle of the Great Law... Individuals cannot designate themselves as leaders and holders of titles... There is no word for 'warrior' in the language of the Haudenosaunee, therefore those who have designated themselves 'warriors' have no tradition within the Haudenosaunee... Be it known to all courts of law in Canada and the U.S. and their respective governments that: these businesses, or enterprises of gas and oil sales, casinos, high stakes bingo and gambling enterprises are ille-

48. In a letter to the Mohawk nation (made public on Jan. 28, 1987 in *Indian Time*), the Onondaga Nation agreed with Mohawk Nation Council regulations and affirmed "there should be a common set of regulations for all Haudenosaunee territories."

gal, none have the consent or support of the Nations. Therefore, individuals and all such businesses are *without* the sovereign protection of the Confederate Nations of the Haudenosaunee."

On April 13th, 1990, a Proclamation is made by the Mohawk Nation Council of Chiefs. It finds:

"that the MSSF who also call themselves the warriors are a lawless and terrorist cult who act as the protectorates of many illegal and deviant activities within the Akwesasne Community." It "finds their repeated acts treasonous, seditious and defiant of our ancient government." It "demands that all individuals who are participating in the outlaw warrior cult cease and desist association and activities with said warrior cult immediately." A 22-point indictment is made, for example, that such warrior cult activity is illegal, that the services of said warriors cult has never been sanctioned or hired by the Mohawk Nation, that the doctrine of said warrior cult has twisted and manipulated the principles of the Great Law to support destructive activities, that said warrior group has demonstrated anarchist behaviour, recognises no government leadership within Akwesasne or the Confederacy, that it takes active criminals as members of their cult, that it protects illegal and immoral activities of some of its members, that individual members of the cult have placed Akwesasne community members in imminent danger and in fear of their lives and of their families' lives, engaged in acts of intimidation, threats against lives, homes and property of Mohawk people, have misled and seduced individuals into a doctrine of hate which has divided families, turned children against parents, brother against brother, Mohawk against Mohawk, has corrupted the minds of children and led them to believe that killing is acceptable behaviour and accepting personal assault weapons as essential tools for existence within the community, carried and discharged weapons directed against Mohawk homes, families, children and individuals, disrupted sacred ceremonies and acted violently against Mohawk people while ceremonies were being conducted, have protected deviant, violent and unacceptable criminal behaviours, incited violence against their own people, desecrated and disturbed the burial sites of Mohawk people, disrupted Grand Council meetings and diverted their attention away from the urgent issues of the Haudenosaunee people, repeatedly threatened the lives of Chiefs and Clan Mothers, engaged in fabrication of vile and venomous rumours designed to defame and degrade the characters of individuals and leadership within Akwesasne, practised treasonous activities aimed at the destruction of the Mohawk Nation Government, engaged in seditious acts aimed at discrediting and overthrowing the Mohawk nation government, and usurped the powers of the Mohawk Nation's leadership. [Note: In April, the people of Akwesasne were forced by the Warriors to evacuate their village. In May, New York State Police, RCMP, Ontario and Quebec Police invaded Akwesasne and declared martial law; both the Warriors and the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Council decided not to interfere.]

On May 3, 1990, the Mohawk Nation Council released its proposals for restoring peace to Akwesasne. (On May 4, a letter is sent by the Warriors to the Onondaga Council of Chiefs, denouncing this "conspiracy.") On May 12, 1990, the Six Nations Confederacy (Grand River), wrote to the Queen of

England and President Bush with copies to Canadian and Québec governments and to Governor Cuomo of New York, reminding them of the Haldimand Deed, of the Silver Government Chain, the Two-Row Wampum Treaty and other treaties, and stating that the Five Nations have always been allies but not subjects to the Crown or Great Britain, etc.

"We buried all weapons, do not possess weapons and wish to widen the road back to principles of the Great Law of Peace and rebuild the Community of Akwesasne.

"We cannot accept or support any action of armed conflict. We do not possess weapons, but only the willingness to speak with kind words and to seek peace among us."

The Confederacy outlined precisely what they are prepared to do to restore the Peace and rebuild the community of Akwesasne.

- 1) We must first get both sides of the conflict to agree to set aside their weapons for the purpose of establishing Peace talks. This will be done by a group of Clan Mothers from the Grand River, approaching both sides and inviting them to sit down and discuss the problem.
- 2a) If both sides agree to participate in Peace talks, their representatives will be invited to Council at Onondaga Longhouse at Ohswekan, Ontario...
- 2b) If either side refuses the request to put down their weapons and participate in the Peace talks, then that side will be deemed to have moved outside the jurisdiction of the *Kaianerenko:wa* and the Confederacy and will have placed themselves in a position as subject to the laws of other Nations.
- 3) The Confederacy at Grand River is prepared to condole Mohawk Chiefs at Akwesasne to assume the responsibility of governing the Mohawk Nation according to the *Kaianerenko:wa*.
- 4) The American and Canadian multi-level jurisdictional authorities at Akwesasne have contributed to the factionalism which exists. Accordingly, talks must be held with these Governments to resolve the jurisdictional problems. The land status of Akwesasne should be changed through negotiations to become Mohawk Nation land with one Mohawk Government as a functioning part...

Any attempt by the American and Canadian Governments to impose their self-government policies and laws will be viewed as contributing to the conflict and not in the best interest of a peaceful solution...

On May 17, 1990 Governor Cuomo met with the Mohawk Nation Council and representatives of the Six Nations Confederacy. It was decided that the State Police would remain until other solutions were found.

In July 1990, the Warriors changed the focus of their militancy to Oka. They blocked the Mercier bridge and "hijacked" the negotiations at Oka, passing themselves off as Iroquois Confederacy spokesmen. The Six Nations

Confederacy at Grand River and Onondaga repeatedly sent delegates to talk with all the Mohawks — Warriors included — and to negotiate with the Canadian/Québec governments. Talks with John Ciaccia were going well. But the Warriors failed to back the Confederacy's agreement with Ciaccia.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, the Canadian/Québec governments were not ready to recognise the Mohawks as a Nation with its own legal ways. They felt that "any proposal to resolve this crisis must recognise that the Criminal Code applies equally to all Canadians, Warriors included, and that it will be enforced." The Confederacy could only conclude: "They had no real intention to negotiate."<sup>50</sup>

Since the Oka crisis, the Warriors have concentrated their attention on their economic interests, the St. Jerome trials, and keeping Québec police out of the Kahnawake community. It remains to be seen if they will ever recognise some of their errors, disclaim their pretensions to representing the Confederacy, bury their weapons under the Tree of Peace, disband as a Warrior Society and return to the One Mind Circle of the Six Nations Confederacy. The latter cannot afford such an unfortunate division of forces.

A final and most important remark.

One can go on describing the Warrior Society, the battles between various Mohawk factions, the recent civil war in Akwesasne, etc., and blaming this or that on one faction, one group or another. But one must remember that all these events were rooted in the loss of the Native landbase and of the way of life once based upon it, due primarily to Western invasion and its policies of termination.

As Bruce Johansen expressed very well in his excellent book on the recent conflicts in Akwesasne:

"Without loss of the land and the way of life that Mohawks had based on it, the nationalistic Warrior Society... might never have arisen. Had the construction of the St. Lawrence Seaway shortly after World War II and subsequent industrialization of the area not destroyed traditional ways of making a living in Mohawk country, gambling and smuggling may never have emerged as avenues of economic survival there."<sup>51</sup>

49. "When Confederacy negotiators presented (Warriors) with an agreement which contained most of what they said they wanted, and certainly all they would ever get, they turned it down... The Warriors so clearly represent economic interests with a strong criminal flavour, that no coherent government would be likely to enter into any relations with them, their claim to legitimacy has been permanently destroyed as far as Canada, Ontario and New York Governments are concerned." *Report to the Confederacy on the Eastern Mohawk Communities and the Summer of 1990*. An internal report (p. 27).

50. *Report to the Confederacy* (op. cit. p. 25).

51. Johansen, Bruce E., *Life and Death in Mohawk Country* (Golden, Colorado, North American Press) 1993.

ANNUAL INDEX 1993

ARTICLES (issues)		pages
BEDFORD, D. & POBIHUSCHY, S.	<i>Towards a People's Economy: The Co-op Atlantic Experience</i> Series: Endogenous & Vernacular Alternatives. 2. Canada (No. 120)	1-42
ESTEVA, G.	<i>A New Source of Hope: «The Margins»</i> Series: Endogenous & Vernacular Alternatives. 1. Mexico (No. 119)	1-62
VACHON, R.	<i>The Mohawk Dynamics of Peace</i> Ch. III: The People of the Great Peace, (No. 118)	1-82
VACHON, R.	<i>The Mohawk Nation . Chapter IV</i> <i>Its Seven Communities. Brief History.</i> (No. 121)	1-49

INTERCULTURE – Issues available

NATIVE PEOPLES	
48	The Native Renaissance
53	Homo Primus
64	Political Self-Determination of Native Peoples III: <i>Haudenosaunee</i> (Iroquois)
74	Native Indian-Christian Dialogue I
75	Native Law & Native Rights II
85	The Persistence of Native Indian Values
110	A Call for Dialogue Between Native Peoples and Whites
113	The Mohawk Nation & its Communities (Chapter 1) <i>Robert VACHON</i>
114	The Mohawk Nation & its Communities (Chapter 2) <i>Robert VACHON</i>
118	The Mohawk Dynamics of Peace (Chapter 3) <i>Robert VACHON</i>
121	The Mohawk Nation. Its Seven Communities. A Brief History (Chapter 4) <i>Robert VACHON</i>
CULTURAL WORLDS	
69	African & Indigenous Brazil I
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