

**The Meaning of Self-Government  
in Kahnawake**

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## **Executive Summary**

This study examines the Mohawk community of Kahnawake with the objective of determining the Mohawk view on key issues involved in the discussion of Aboriginal self-government. The two main research questions centre around three issues: Mohawk views on the appropriate forms of internal organization; Mohawk views on the capacity of their community to manage the institutions of self-government; and Mohawk views on the optimum framework for a relationship between Kahnawake and other governments.

### *Historical Context*

The Mohawks of Kahnawake have a history as a distinct community within the Mohawk Nation dating back to the late seventeenth century. The central fact of Kahnawake's history influencing its contemporary political culture is the independence it sought from both its Native political organization — the Iroquois Confederacy — and the Euro-American empires. Iroquois political traditions, religion and trade were the influencing factors in causing the Mohawks of Kahnawake to assume a distinct identity and politics. The political culture created out of this intersection of tradition and modernity is unique. It is what has prepared Kahnawake to be a leading player in the revitalization of the movement for increased independence among Aboriginal peoples.

### *Institutional Overview*

Kahnawake has developed a range of institutions to assert local control in many areas. The important distinction between Kahnawake's efforts and others is that the Mohawks have explicitly denied the legitimacy of *Indian Act* institutions and established or reformed structures that draw their legitimacy instead from the collective will of the people of Kahnawake. Another remarkable feature of the community's institutional framework is the extent to which Kahnawake has extended its jurisdictional control beyond the legal parameters established by the *Indian Act* and federal policy.

### *Three Aspects of Self-Government*

In three key areas, the Mohawks of Kahnawake have developed a clear set of ideas on the

progress of their community toward the ideal of self-government. Concerning forms of internal organization, the Mohawks are critical of the existing political structures because of their basic reliance on federal statutes for legitimacy. But the alternative, a traditionalist revival of ancient structures, is not regarded as a viable option in purist form. Instead, Mohawks view the synthesis of traditional Mohawk values with existing administrative structures as the key to an appropriate form of internal organization. With respect to jurisdictional capacities, Mohawks sense that self-government ultimately means assuming control and managing all community institutions, but they are not confident of the current capability of the community to manage every aspect of government. They view some form of co-operation with Canada in the transition to independence as necessary. Concerning external relations, the Mohawks make a clear distinction between co-operating with Canada on an administrative level and surrendering sovereignty. They view the freedom to make associations that are in their interests as an essential element of self-government.

#### *The Meaning of Self-Government*

In Kahnawake, self-government as it is commonly conceived is an interim measure toward the achievement of complete local autonomy and the recognition of its sovereignty as a part of the Mohawk Nation. There is a clear distinction between long-term ideals and short- and mid-term practical arrangements. The condition for immediate progress is federal agreement to enhanced local control (a limited form of self-government from the Mohawk perspective). The prerequisite for a long-term lasting solution is Canadian recognition of Mohawk sovereignty and the negotiation of power-sharing agreements within the context of community capabilities and federal treaty obligations on a nation-to-nation basis.

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### **Community Profile – The Mohawks of Kahnawake**

#### *Population*

Indian Register 6839, Band List 5981

#### *Land Base*

Kahnawake Indian Reserve # 14 (5477.1 hectares)

Doncaster Indian Reserve # 17 (7355.7 hectares)

Seigneurie de Sault St-Louis (approximately 7000 hectares contested)

#### *Location*

Kahnawake Reserve: 8 kilometres southwest of Montreal, Quebec

Doncaster Reserve: 20 kilometres northeast of Saint-Agathe-des-Monts, Quebec

Seigneurie de Sault St-Louis: adjacent to Kahnawake's eastern border

#### *Government*

Indian Act Band Council: Mohawk Council of Kahnawake

Six Nations Confederacy: Mohawk Nation Council

Kahnawake is located on the south shore of the St. Lawrence River, 15 kilometres south of downtown Montreal. The land base of the Mohawks of Kahnawake includes what is known as the Kahnawake Indian Reserve. This is supplemented by the Doncaster Indian Reserve located near Ste-Agathe-des-Monts, Quebec, a territory shared with the Mohawks of Kanasatake. Additionally, the Mohawks of Kahnawake claim ownership of the Seigneurie de Sault St-Louis, a 1680 seigniorial grant on the reserve's eastern border that includes the current reserve as well as approximately 5000 hectares of additional land, alienated at present from the Mohawks and occupied by a number of non-Indian municipalities.

At \$30,000, the Mohawks of Kahnawake have one of the highest per-family incomes of any Aboriginal community. The Mohawks have traditionally engaged in mobile employment, most notably high steel construction occupations. Recently, they have refocused their efforts on

developing the local economy, and most Mohawks now derive their incomes directly or indirectly from either government sources or local business. The most recent statistics compiled on Kahnawake's overall cash flow indicate that 66 per cent of income is derived from government transfer payments, 20 per cent from off-reserve salaries, 13 per cent from local business, and 1 per cent from investment income. These figures do not include substantial incomes derived from Mohawk employment and entrepreneurship in the underground economy surrounding the trade and distribution of tax-free tobacco products.

The Territory of Kahnawake is governed by the Mohawk Council of Kahnawake (MCK). The council is composed of a grand chief and eleven council members elected by a plurality of votes in a biennial general election. The current council is led by Grand Chief Joseph Tokwirot Norton and has a mandate that extends through July 1994. On an administrative level, an executive committee made up of two council members, three senior staff, a manager and the grand chief has been delegated operational authority.

There are at least two parallel institutions modelled on the traditional Iroquois model that represent, on a political level, those Mohawks who deny the legitimacy of the *Indian Act* chartered MCK. The traditional Iroquois-style governments are referred to as 'longhouses' and represent the focal point of social, cultural and political activity for a significant number of Kahnawake Mohawks. It is important to note that while there is divergence on the institution most appropriate to represent and govern the community on the political level, administrative, financial and legislative responsibility is vested exclusively in the MCK. Kahnawake has reassumed authority over programs and services in a number of jurisdictional areas. This includes control in whole or in part in the following sectors: justice (Court of Kahnawake and the Kahnawake Peacekeepers), education, social services, health, and economic development. Institutions in all these sectors have been created by MCK directive or by grassroots initiative. Most are governed by a board or committee of community members representing a cross-section of the population.

Kahnawake has also developed a dense infrastructure of non-governmental activities. There are a number of youth programs and initiatives, social clubs, language retention and cultural development programs, and an active sports program, especially strong in wrestling, hockey, softball and lacrosse. Kahnawake has a local radio station, a bi-weekly newspaper and a bookstore and is the site of the east region's largest pow-wow.

## **Background**

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) research project on Aboriginal governance seeks to educate Aboriginal and Aboriginal people about the diversity in philosophy, institutions and the practice of self-government among Aboriginal communities. With this goal in mind, RCAP identified Kahnawake as a community whose collective thinking and experience in the drive toward achieving a workable form of self-government may be instructive for others.

For their part, the people of Kahnawake will benefit from the consolidation and documentation of thought on the future development of the government within their community. With fact and opinion presented in a concise format, the Mohawks of Kahnawake could potentially use this study as a basis for further discussion and a platform from which to advance the process toward a further revitalization of internal government structures and re-establishment of a satisfactory relationship with other governments.

In October 1992, RCAP contacted representatives of the community to discuss the possibility of initiating a study in Kahnawake. After a series of meetings in Kahnawake and through subsequent correspondence, it was agreed that RCAP's and Kahnawake's goals with respect to the objectives of research in the community were clearly compatible. RCAP and the Mohawk Council of Kahnawake (MCK) then agreed to conduct research into self-government in Kahnawake. The specific objectives of the Kahnawake case study were developed co-operatively by RCAP and the study's principal researcher. The research process and methodology were developed by RCAP and offered to the principal researcher as general guidelines for the conduct of research as part of the governance project. As determined by RCAP, the MCK and the principal researcher, the study concentrates on answering one basic question: What is the context and meaning of Aboriginal self-government in Kahnawake? It also analyzes and interprets the implications of Kahnawake's answer to the question.

### *Research Question*

This study determines the context and meaning of self-government in Kahnawake by approaching the question from the perspective of the Mohawks. The research focuses on delineating ideas within the community on two key tasks facing the community at this point:

- How will the community come to a common definition of tradition and reintegrate

traditional values into its institutions and combine traditional structures with the existing *Indian Act* structures? Essentially, this will be a question of determining the means to operationalize a traditional form of government in the modern cultural, social and political context.

- Once the internal institutions are a reality, at least at the conceptual level, how will the Mohawks relate in the political sphere to other peoples and governments? This will be a question of determining the community's jurisdictional capacity, appropriate power-sharing mechanisms and the broader legal-political relationship to the Mohawk Nation, the Iroquois Confederacy, Canada and other nation-states.

### *Structure and Methodology*

This study revolves upon two axes. The first is the context/meaning axis which, incorporates the Mohawks' previous experiences and future goals relative to self-government. The second axis is the internal/external dichotomy. The axes do intersect, but an effort will be made to maintain a distinction between internal and external concerns and environmental factors as community members' views are researched. Context is investigated through an analysis of the Mohawks' history and an overview of the current institutions operating within the community. The meaning of self-government in Kahnawake is investigated through research into the attitudes, perceptions and goals of Mohawks with respect to the future development of internal institutions and relationships to other governments.

The research was conducted under the general guidelines established in two RCAP documents entitled *The Methodological Foundations of Collaborative Research* and *Collaborative Research Strategies*. The ideal set out in these documents for a community-based, collaborative and culturally appropriate research plan was achieved by tailoring tactics and the overall research strategy to the particular Kahnawake situation. The data that form the basis for the interpretive sections of the study derive mainly from observation and the key informant interviews, with substantiation and verification flowing from a small-scale sample survey.

The main tactics and instruments employed in the study are documentary and policy research on the history of Kahnawake and the institutions currently existing within the community; key informant interviews with members of the community who have formed a coherent set of ideas on the question of self-government, including longhouse leaders, MCK elected chiefs, educators and business leaders; a general survey<sup>i</sup> of Mohawks containing a



random sampling of opinion on key questions; focus group conversations or open-ended interviews with groups within the community whose perspective is valuable but often ignored in other research, including youth, elders, and C-31 women; and off-reserve Mohawks.

The results of the research are consolidated and presented in five sections. The first provides a concise history of the political evolution of the Mohawks of Kahnawake. As well, it gives readers a general sense of the political culture underpinning political activity in Kahnawake. The second section provides a general overview of the institutions of government currently operating in Kahnawake.<sup>ii</sup> A third section documents the Mohawks' ideas concerning the future of their internal institutional structures and relationship to other governments. In the fourth section, an interpretive analysis of the self-government process as it has evolved in Kahnawake is provided. Finally, the fifth section presents an integrated set of recommendations for community action and government policy oriented toward the complete reintroduction of traditional Mohawk values and principles in Kahnawake's internal politics, as well as the establishment of a relationship between Kahnawake and other governments that respects those values and principles.

## **Historical Context**

Since its beginnings as an autonomous political community, Kahnawake has been a unique synthesis of tradition and modernity. The history of Kahnawake parallels the transition of many Aboriginal nations, and particularly the peoples of the Six Nations Confederacy, from the pre-contact age into an age dominated by a completely altered social, cultural and political reality. The adaptive instinct of the Kahnawake Mohawks has guided their evolution from a people firmly rooted, until the eighteenth century, in the culture and traditions of the Iroquois Confederacy, through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to an autonomous position on the periphery of both the Aboriginal world and the newly established Euro-American empires, and into the twentieth century as a leading force in the revival of traditional values and the reconstruction of Aboriginal political institutions.

The central irony of Kahnawake lies in the important role the Mohawk people have played in the story of the most powerful symbolic Aboriginal alternative to Euro-American cultural and political dominance in North America. The Mohawks were central to the formation of the Iroquois Confederacy, an institution that presented Euro-Americans with such a

formidable challenge on every level of interaction for such a long period of time. And yet it was the Mohawks, in their symbolic withdrawal from the centre of the Confederacy to Kahnawake, who were so pivotal in destroying its unity, which led in turn to the diminution of the Confederacy's military and political power.

But just as the Iroquois culture survived the long dark era of military and political irrelevance, so did the Kahnawake Mohawk links to their former political and intellectual traditions. When the time came to revitalize the Confederacy, the Kahnawake Mohawks took an active role in modernizing its ideology and structures. They also became the focus of political struggles and direct action toward the objective of recreating a viable alternative to the Euro-American institutions imposed upon them, which had become untenable and unacceptable. In this respect, the story of the Kahnawake Mohawks is not only illustrative of the evolution of the Iroquois, but instructive as an explanation of how an Aboriginal community can emerge from under the crushing weight of imposed foreign institutions to initiate the re-establishment of a political order based on their own culture and values.

Throughout Kahnawake's history, several persistent factors have emerged as key themes for analysis:

### *Iroquois Political Tradition*

The pre-European Iroquois social, cultural and political reality remains a potent intellectual force among the Kahnawake Mohawk. Attempts to understand the community at any time during its history, especially in the contemporary era, must begin with a realization that the principles established in Mohawk society before contact with Europeans retain much of their saliency and power. Until the 1700s, the ancestors of the Kahnawake Mohawks were still an integral part of the Iroquois Confederacy and firmly rooted in Aboriginal ground. Their transformation since has been built on top of that spiritual and cultural base.

The extent of the Mohawks' traditional territory generally follows the boundaries established by the waterways they used for trade and warfare purposes in the pre-contact era. The Mohawk did not hunt extensively, but relied upon an agricultural base economy supplemented by trading with key allied Aboriginal nations.<sup>iii</sup> Attempts to delineate absolute boundaries in a Euro-American sense are futile because of the non-possessive Aboriginal understanding of territoriality. The closest approximation to the concept of a set of borders may be in the

consideration of the lands used by the Mohawk for residence and other lands considered strategically or economically necessary and thus defensible.<sup>iv</sup>

Thus considered, traditional Mohawk territory may be thought of as a rectangular area bounded in the north by the south shore of the St. Lawrence River from the Richelieu River (Sorel, Quebec) to the Oswegatchie River (Ogdensburg, N.Y.), and in the south by the Mohawk River from Canada Creek (Utica, N.Y.) to the junction with the Hudson River (Albany, N.Y.). Indeed the earliest French maps of the area refer to what later became known as the St. Lawrence River as *La Rivière des Iroquois* and to Lake Champlain as *Lac des Agniers*, in reference to the archaic French term for the Mohawks.

The culture that developed in this region has been noted as harbouring the most sophisticated example of Aboriginal political organization and philosophy.<sup>v</sup> The Iroquois were political beings to their core. The origins of their political culture lay in a time when the peoples who would later make up the Iroquois Confederacy suffered incessant intertribal warfare, when political and social order had yet to be established among the Mohawk, Seneca, Oneida, Onondaga and Cayuga nations. Their oral traditions contain the story of how their ancestors overcame the conflict and devised a form of association explicitly engineered, in the political realm, to manage power relations between nations.

The Confederacy was established based upon the principles contained in a message delivered by the Peacemaker, a Huron who lived among the Iroquois and who was instrumental in bringing the five nations together in a political union. The message, which has become the central element in the Iroquois' political ideology, is known as the *Kaienerekowa* or Great Law of Peace.<sup>vi</sup> Having since taken on mythical and even spiritual significance for the people of the Confederacy it established, the *Kaienerekowa's* detailed instructions on social and political organization, international relations, leadership selection and decision-making processes remain essential components of the Mohawk political culture.

The other element that rivals the *Kaienerekowa* as an influencing factor upon Iroquois political culture is the *Kahswentha* or the Two Row Wampum. The *Kahswentha* is a broad belt constructed of quahog shells in the design of two parallel purple rows on a white background and represents an oral record of the treaty established between the Mohawk people and the first Europeans that came into their territory. Dating from the sixteenth century, it documents a treaty with the Dutch who travelled up the Hudson River. The *Kahswentha* is a powerful symbolic

representation of the relationship agreed to by the Mohawks with all subsequent Europeans.<sup>vii</sup> Thus the ideal of a commitment to harmonious co-existence and sharing of resources, along with mutual guarantees of non-interference and recognition of each other's distinctiveness, was established in the Iroquois political culture from the time of earliest contact with the European newcomers.

### *Religion*

For the Kahnawake Mohawks, religion has always been more than spirituality. In traditional Iroquois society and in the power politics of the colonial era, religion was inextricably bound to politics. Missionary activity by the Jesuits among the Mohawks in their former homelands created many believers in Christ and many converts to the idea that a Mohawk-French alliance would ensure both spiritual and temporal salvation. Kahnawake's relationship with organized religion was formed in that time of religious fervour and conflict, and the ties that bind church and state have yet to be severed. Later came the rejection of Catholicism as the religious base of the community, and the revival of older forms of religion spawned their own conversions and had serious political implications. The manipulation of religious sentiment and spirituality for political purposes continues to be a prime feature on Kahnawake's political and cultural landscape.

The site occupied by Kahnawake was originally settled as a religious centre called *Kentake* for devout Indian converts to Christianity. In the early part of the seventeenth century, a few Onondaga, Huron and Mohawks who had left their home villages to live among the Jesuit missionaries in New France settled outside the Jesuit retreat at La Prairie on the south shore of Montreal.<sup>viii</sup> The village became a refuge for Indians who had chosen to embrace Christianity and who had to face the inevitable retaliation by their traditionalist brethren who did not share their enthusiasm for the foreign spiritual message. The early Catholic converts also faced the problem of choosing a religious orientation whose state sponsor was at war with their own nation.

Since the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Iroquois had been at war with New France. A first encounter in 1608 between Mohawks and Samuel de Champlain at Schenectady on Lake Champlain led to the French killing a number of Mohawk warriors. The initial impression of the first encounter coloured the relationship for years, as the Mohawks led the

Confederacy in a ferocious attempt to destroy the French settlements at Montreal and Quebec and drive the colony of New France from the St. Lawrence River Valley.

Using religion as an instrument of diplomacy, the French sent missionaries among the Onondaga and established an accord with the Onondaga chiefs that led to peace between the Confederacy and the French in the middle of the seventeenth century. The Mohawks refused to participate in a peace treaty with the French, and with the backs of their Confederacy brothers turned, were thus forced to confront New France alone. Beginning in 1666, the French launched two campaigns into Mohawk country. The first march was in the dead of winter and failed; the second was in the spring of 1667 and culminated in the destruction of all of the Mohawk villages and food stores along the Mohawk River Valley.<sup>ix</sup> In the wake of this military defeat, the utility of religious conversion appeared with some clarity among many more Mohawks.

In 1667, the Mohawks agreed to a peace with the French whose explicit terms included a political alliance and religious proselytizing by Jesuit missionaries in the key Mohawk village rebuilt along the Mohawk River — Kahnawake. Over the course of the next 50 years, the Mohawks, led by the chiefs and women from the group of families from the main Mohawk village at Kahnawake, migrated en masse to the Catholic Indian religious community and re-established their village on the St. Lawrence River — renaming the new settlement in remembrance of their homeland.<sup>x</sup>

The character of the community began to change soon after the arrival of the Mohawks. Whereas Kentake was a religious centre, the transfer of Mohawk people in such large numbers and the climate in which the move was initiated gave the community an entirely different orientation. The Mohawk language and culture came to dominate, and the community became immersed in Iroquois politics and diplomacy. Kahnawake became more of a military, diplomatic and trading centre than a religious retreat. As early as 1677, a gunsmith and a tavern replaced religious oracles as the main features of the gates to the village. And by 1736, the majority of the Mohawk Nation was re-established at Kahnawake and the other French-allied village it spawned (Kanesatake). There were 1200 Mohawk at Kahnawake alone, with only 600 remaining in two villages along the Mohawk River.

### *Commerce*

Commerce has never trailed religion by more than a few steps as an important factor in

motivating Mohawk political activity. Whereas some Mohawks may have been persuaded to Kahnawake by the warm light of the Jesuit's Christian message, many more were certainly drawn to the village by cold mercantile calculation. The Mohawk have been intermediaries in the underground economies that emerge in the face of restrictions imposed by imperial or federal edict. From furs to skilled labour to contraband cigarettes, many Kahnawake Mohawks have ignored trade barriers with impunity and managed to prosper in supplying a demand within the Euro-American economy. The village was established to take advantage of a strategic location at the head of a key trade route between two Euro-American empires, and inter-empire trade remains a key factor in the community's development.

This pattern was established long before Europeans appeared in the Mohawks' world. War and trade took the Mohawk by river from their villages throughout a vast network. Their presence at both heads of the important trade route extending from present-day New York to Montreal along the Hudson River-Lake Champlain-Richelieu River channel was well established in the pre-contact era. When the European colonial empires came to dominate the area militarily, the Mohawk simply adapted their economic activity to reflect the need for intermediaries between the mutually hostile European newcomers.

The Mohawks at first took advantage of the Dutch willingness to supply them with arms to dominate as intermediaries between the interior Indian tribes and the Dutch settlement at Fort Orange (Albany). They then established a solid allegiance fulfilling the same role with respect to the British successors to the Dutch. Later, they extended their alliance to the French as well. The Mohawks sensed an opportunity to rise above dependency upon the fortunes of a single European ally and created a vital role for themselves between two of them. But the basis of the relationship always remained in the commercial role of the Mohawks located at Montreal and Albany.<sup>xi</sup>

The Mohawks of Kahnawake prospered politically and economically throughout the colonial period. They manipulated their strategic importance so as to guarantee respect from the Europeans for their independence. But their economic status evaporated along with the fur trade beginning in the 1820s. Compounding the Mohawks' dilemma, a final peace between the Euro-American empires was established in 1815, negating the Mohawks' military and diplomatic importance.<sup>xii</sup> As the Euro-Americans began to consolidate themselves politically and territorially, the presence of the Mohawk village outside Montreal went from being a strategic

focal point to an economic and political liability for the governors of British North America.

The British tried to lure the Mohawks into abandoning their lands at Kahnawake, offering them in 1851 another territory to the north. The Mohawks accepted the additional lands but remained on the south shore of Montreal. The industrial age then struck with full force as commercial interests and the British governors disregarded Mohawk rights and expropriated large tracts of land for use in developing commercial railways and port facilities and as rights of way for transportation and electrical lines.

In this era of irrelevance, the Mohawks adapted to various degrees by continuing their military tradition, serving with the British military in overseas campaigns and with the Union Army in the United States Civil War.<sup>xiii</sup> They also engaged in a number of occupations that saw them integrate into the broader market economy, albeit in a manner reflecting their traditional mobility and sense of independence. Farming, crafts, river boat piloting and the entertainment industry were primary sources of employment during the latter half of the nineteenth century in Kahnawake.<sup>xiv</sup> Into the twentieth century, the Mohawks came to specialize in high steel construction. With as much as 75 per cent of the male work force engaged in the industry, Kahnawake re-adapted to the ancient rhythms of regional travel and small group action reflected in the modern construction economy centred in New York and Detroit and, to a lesser extent, Boston.

### *Marginalization and Resurgence*

The decline in economic and diplomatic fortunes for Kahnawake as a collectivity had begun with the end of the fur trade and the War of 1812. The disregard by the British toward the end of the nineteenth century was compounded when Canada inherited the British legacy and embarked on its own effort to consolidate authority over the Aboriginal nations located within its newly established borders. Caught in a web of forced dependency — the combination of declining economic independence and a consistent program of cultural and political assimilation by Canada — Kahnawake was marginalized.

Beginning with the 1882 Walbank Land Survey, which allocated parcels of land on the basis of individual ownership, Canada gradually imposed its legislative and administrative regime upon the Mohawks. Powerless to resist the intrusions, and restricted in their ability to migrate to other traditional territories, Kahnawake endured further impositions. The *Indian Act*

system of government was established in 1890, the administration of successive Indian agents began in the 1930s, and the imposition of federal authority was completed by the 1951 revisions to the *Indian Act* and the consolidation of the band council system of government.<sup>xv</sup>

Despite the imposition of a foreign authority, the Mohawks of Kahnawake continued to assert their rights as an independent people based upon their historical relationship with Canada's predecessor states. In many small ways, the Mohawks sought to preserve their ties to the Iroquois tradition and to the larger idea of an Iroquois Confederacy. Given the nature of the Iroquois culture, it is not surprising that cultural revival and political action are closely linked in the history of Kahnawake. In the early 1920s, for example, a political victory for the Iroquois in the reaffirmation by United States Supreme Court of their cross-border mobility rights, contributed to an expansion of the traditional longhouse religion and culture, which had been harboured among only a small minority of Kahnawake's families for decades.

Another traditional cultural resurgence ensued in the wake of a divisive conflict in 1947 over the character of Kahnawake's community government. In the federal debate surrounding the last major *Indian Act* reform, the people of Kahnawake were divided between those who wanted to move further toward a western-style representative government, and those who favoured a traditional Iroquois-style government. The revised 1951 *Indian Act* eventually reinforced the ideals of one faction, but their victory alienated many other Mohawks, and the conflict created opposing political blocs within the community. The axis of conflict became 'traditional' versus 'band council' and has remained the salient division within the community.

The opposing political blocs co-existed more or less without outward signs of hostility until the contemporary era. At the introduction of the band council system at the turn of the century, there had been opposition to its implementation by significant numbers of Mohawk women, and opposition continued from various sectors within the community, usually based on a denial of the legitimacy of the institution perceived as an instrument of the general government's plan to undermine the community. Yet there was grudging acceptance of the utility of the band council as a means of relating with the federal government and later as a channel for federal funding to the community. Only recently has the denial of legitimacy overridden practical considerations and led a majority in Kahnawake to challenge the wisdom of accepting the existence of a federally mandated, and nominally authoritative, government institution. This development follows in the wake of the most important event in the modern history of Kahnawake: the



coming of the St. Lawrence Seaway.

A century of predatory federal expropriations in Kahnawake culminated in the 1940s and 1950s as the community faced its most serious threat to its land base. During this period, the federal government began to implement a plan to construct a channel to bypass the shallow rapids common along the length of the St. Lawrence River from Montreal to the Great Lakes. Previously unnavigable, the St. Lawrence would be made to accommodate seagoing vessels and facilitate freight transport and trade between the United States and Canada. Predictably, Kahnawake lay in the path its designers had drawn for the Seaway. The band council vehemently protested the further expropriation of Mohawk territory in the interests of Canadian commercial development. But its leadership ultimately failed to prevent the seizure and forced relocation by orders in council of hundreds of Kahnawake Mohawks as the ugly trench was gouged from the land occupied by their homes and farms.<sup>xvi</sup>

In time, the Seaway became a permanent monument to failure. The legal challenges and public appeals launched by the band council failed utterly to gain for Kahnawake even adequate compensation for the lands taken for Seaway construction. And the federal government failed to uphold its trust responsibility and protect the land and rights of the Mohawks of Kahnawake. Where before the Seaway a minority of traditionalist Mohawks had turned their back on the idea of co-operating with Canada, after the Seaway most Mohawks came to view the attempt to protect their lands and rights within the framework of Canadian institutions as pointless.

The Seaway was not the only factor in causing the Mohawk public to reject the idea of Canada and Canadian institutions; there were many other subsequent policy failures on issues as diverse as policing, land management and membership that caused an almost complete rupture in the Canada-Kahnawake relationship. But the physical impact and timing of the Seaway make it the common reference point for the movement that has swept Kahnawake's politics and culture since.

Kahnawake has embarked on a process of recreating its links to a traditional Iroquois past — not only in a spiritual or cultural sense, but in politics and philosophy as well. Having been shown the disregard Canada displayed for the Mohawk people, beginning in the 1960s Kahnawake turned inward for its source of strength and legitimacy. What has occurred since is very much a resurgence in the political culture of the Mohawks' forefathers.

The resurgence of the traditional ideology has many facets: the re-assertion of rights

based not on treaties, but on historical precedent and the *Kaienerekowa*; the rise of militancy in the 1980s as a reflection of the frustration felt by Mohawks with the intransigence of the government of Canada; the resurrection of a traditional trade economy located in Iroquois country as evidence of national rights based on the concept of the *Kahswentha* predating and superseding Canadian laws; the band council's disavowal of its own legitimacy and commitment to the re-establishment of a traditional form of government. All of these represent different aspects of a single phenomenon: Kahnawake's long overdue emergence from the irrelevancy of its status as a living artifact of colonialism.

The intersection of these themes and the factors motivating political action contained within them have undergone many evolutions since the ancestors of today's Kahnawake Mohawks started out from their Mohawk River Valley homelands to create a new community. Kahnawake has gone from a position of power and influence, through an era of political marginalization, to the contemporary era, which has seen a revitalization of the Mohawks' traditional culture, with an accompanying rise in their political and economic status. The constant feature has been a precarious balancing act — sometimes performed with finesse, other times fumbled through — between two worlds.

Their establishment between the Aboriginal and newcomer worlds has been the curse and the power of the Kahnawake Mohawks. They have had to carve out a place for themselves as Aboriginal people amidst the overwhelming presence of a Euro-American society and struggle to maintain their identity as Mohawks in spite of the increased distance between their community and their spiritual homeland in the Mohawk River Valley. But in the effort, the character of Kahnawake has emerged and been focused into a powerful ideology and strategic vision. Independence of thought, a steadfast defence of their distinctiveness, and a pervasive aggressiveness as political values have become almost sacred in Kahnawake. This has left them troubled in certain respects, but at the same time uniquely qualified to assume a leadership role in challenging the crippling stasis that has become the defining feature of the relationship between Aboriginal nations and the remaining colonizing empires in North America.

### **Institutional Overview**

Kahnawake has moved decisively to implement its objective of creating government structures that are locally controlled, democratic and in accord with their political and cultural traditions.

The strategy employed by the community's leaders has been to fashion institutions that are first and foremost responsive to the needs of the Mohawk people and responsible to the community as a whole. Externally imposed *Indian Act* structures and government programs have no legitimacy among the Mohawks of Kahnawake. Thus only when it has been beneficial in terms of financing or administering an institution's activities have newly created institutions of Mohawk government been linked to existing *Indian Act* structures. Otherwise, where the Indian Act denies Mohawk jurisdiction, or where existing policies and structures are insufficient, the new institutions are established by collective consent — ignoring the *Indian Act* and based instead on the innate right of the Mohawk people to govern themselves.

Various institutions have been created covering a wide range of areas. These structures are in reality at the base of Kahnawake's assertion of self-government; they are the practical means of creating a structural framework upon which a self-sufficient community is being reconstructed. Kahnawake has supplanted externally imposed institutions in a number of important jurisdictional areas, including health and social welfare, culture and education, justice and security, and economy and finances.

Virtually all the institutions have been created under the legal authority of the Mohawk Council of Kahnawake (MCK). It is important to note that the MCK claims the collective will of the people of Kahnawake as its source of authority and legitimacy. On principle, it rejects the legal status of the *Indian Act* as a sponsoring institution. Thus conceived, the majority of Kahnawake Mohawks consider the MCK to be the legitimate governing authority in the community. This fact has much to do with the efforts the MCK has made to distance itself from the *Indian Act* and establish an independent source of legitimacy. Although still saddled with the philosophical and administrative burden of its creation under the *Indian Act* and forceful imposition by federal authorities, the MCK has been largely successful in shifting the locus of its legitimacy from Ottawa to Kahnawake. The MCK at present is an elected and representative body that is accountable, along with the subsidiary institutions it has created, to the community.

However, the MCK is not accepted as the legitimate governing institution by a significant number of Mohawks, because of their absolute philosophical opposition to the type of linkages created by the council's reliance upon federal transfer payments and the formal legal authority of the *Indian Act*. The non-supporters, primarily Mohawks who have completely reoriented their political beliefs to reflect a militant form of traditionalism, find voice and political representation

in one of the three longhouse structures existing within the community.

In contrast to the MCK, the longhouses are guided exclusively by the principles laid out in the *Kaienerekowa*. Although there is agreement among the longhouses that the Great Law of Peace is the sole legitimate constitution and body of law for Mohawk people, there remains some disparity in the interpretation of the Law. This disparity of opinion with regard to the application of the Law in the contemporary era and the recreation of formal structures of governance accounts for the existence of different longhouses.

As a result of this disagreement, the longhouse movement as a collective has been unable to establish a comprehensive system of institutions capable of displacing those sponsored by the MCK. One longhouse group has attempted to set up a parallel system designed to offer its adherents essential social and educational services and has had a modicum of success on a small scale. One lasting challenge to the authority of the MCK has been the creation by a longhouse of both an administrative organ and a security force.

As a consequence of this co-existence of Kahnawake's two political orientations, there is often competition between them for legitimacy and authority within the community. Nevertheless, there is at present informal discussion among residents regarding the merger of these structures, the objective being a break from financial dependence on the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) and the ensuing emergence of an inclusive and independent form of Mohawk self-government.

Indeed, such a shift toward autonomy has already begun. The institutions in Kahnawake reflect the transition from living under the restrictive control of the *Indian Act* to a democratic, albeit limited, form of self-government, through creatively assessing and addressing the needs of the community and making real efforts to include a broad cross-section of community members in the process. The following overview reflects this shift in its categorization and detailing of the community's institutional framework as a unified whole.

### *Administrative Structures*

The **Mohawk Council of Kahnawake**, first created in 1894, is generally accepted by the community as being the legitimate legislative and administrative authority, as well as representing the community in relations with outside governments. Its Executive Committee administers and operates programs that were previously handled by other levels of government

under the *Indian Act*, as well as holding decision-making power in operational matters. Moreover, administrative control is exercised with regard to a variety of services, including those related to the economy and finances, culture and education, health and social welfare, and justice and security matters.

As of 1987, the mandate of the **Mohawk Nation Office** has been directed by followers of one of Kahnawake's longhouses. Its mandate includes keeping the community abreast of its resolutions through releasing formal statements in accordance with the principles of the Great Law, as well as facilitating changes to its mandate as a result of decisions made by the people of the longhouse. The Mohawk Nation Office and the secretaries of the other two longhouses perform administrative and clerical duties related to the traditions of the longhouse. These include keeping records, files and historical documents of the Mohawk Nation.

#### *Economy and Finances*

Recognizing the reality of Kahnawake's limited land base and the importance of managing housing maintenance and new construction, the **Kahnawake Housing Authority** was established to administer and co-ordinate housing construction and repair in Kahnawake.

In terms of socio-economic initiatives, the **Kahnawake Economic Development Authority** was formed to ensure that inter-governmental policies and services applicable to Kahnawake would be channelled into programs designed to generate revenue within the community. The group also works with Mohawk entrepreneurs by assisting in the development of short- and long-term strategies, as well as by providing supplementary services.

Another community economic resource is the **Kahnawake Caisse Populaire**. The Caisse is a financial institution that has the objective of maximizing the community's resources and giving Mohawks access to financial services and products previously available only from non-Aboriginal institutions. The Caisse has more than 5000 account holding members and assets totalling more than \$40 million.

#### *Culture and Education*

The **Kahnawake Combined Schools Committee** exerts control over all aspects of education including operational and administrative functions. As such, it oversees such organizations as the **Education Centre**. The centre's director is responsible for the management and operation of all

educational facilities at the institutional level, as well as ensuring that the needs of individual users are being met through various mechanisms, such as the provision of assorted general and specially targeted student services.

One example of an educational facility providing specially targeted services is the **Step By Step Early Learning Centre**. This centre offers an intervention program for children with disabilities in which daycare services are also provided, allowing for a pre-school, early learning education in an integrated environment.

As a complement to the various educational facilities on the reserve, the **Kahnawake Recreation Program** fosters and initiates sport and recreational activities in the community, as well as maintaining the facilities in good working order.

Similarly, other organizations exist that further not only the physical health of their users, but also their cultural and social health. One such group is the **Kahnawake Youth Centre**, which promotes the health and social character of Kahnawake children through educational, vocational, cultural and athletic activities.

Focusing specifically on the cultural component, the **Kanien'kehaka Raotitiohkwa Cultural Centre** is key to the community's sense of history and identity. The centre is dedicated to the preservation of the Mohawk language and culture and serves as a repository for documentation in various forms that focuses on the Iroquois Confederacy, the Mohawks of Kahnawake, and Aboriginal peoples.

Adding a vocal component to the visual and participatory elements of Kahnawake's cultural repertoire is the **Community Radio Station** (K103 Hits) which provides the community with culture-oriented and entertainment programming.

Rounding out the cultural or social organizations, some of which are based outside Kahnawake, are those that give the residents of Kahnawake the opportunity to interact with other members of the community in a social setting through their local branches. These include the **Royal Canadian Legion**, the **Knights of Columbus**, and the **Fraternal Order of Moose**, as well as a number of local golf clubs and the **Kahnawake Marina**.

### *Health and Social Welfare*

**Sakotiiia'takehnas Community Services** offers a vast array of agencies, each designed to benefit the community through a Mohawk-controlled network of programs. These programs

include **Kahnawake Social Services**, which provide social and psychological services to the community and are consolidated under **Community Services**.

They also include the **Social Assistance Program**, which implements the myriad provincial regulations and adapts them to Kahnawake's unique social situation. It functions autonomously under the auspices of the Mohawk Council.

Another social service is the **Community Health Representatives** program which aims at helping to improve the physical health, as well as the social and environmental conditions, of the community.

Similarly, the **Sate'shen:naien Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention** program is responsible for primary prevention services in the area of alcohol and drug abuse.

Where prevention has not been successful, **Onento:kon Treatment Services** provide a non-medical therapeutic program for Aboriginal adults with drug and alcohol dependencies in a residential and community-based setting. Its main purpose is to provide treatment counselling and referral information.

In addition to programs targeted specifically to drug and alcohol abuse, there are also facilities in Kahnawake that address the overall health of the community. The **Kateri Memorial Hospital Centre** is a medical centre that aims at improving not only the health of individuals, families and groups in the community, but also their social environments.

Kahnawake has recognized that the physical environment is equally important to the overall well-being of the community. An independent **Kahnawake Environment Committee** has been established by members of the community. The committee co-operates with the MCK and the longhouses in developing and enforcing Mohawk laws pertaining to the conservation and protection of natural resources in Kahnawake and Doncaster. Similarly, the Environmental Protection Committee leads this endeavour by creating guidelines for landfill operations and raising awareness about environmental issues. Furthermore, the committee initiated a recycling program to promote environmental awareness through community participation.

### *Justice and Security*

The **Court of Kahnawake** has a complementary relationship with courts off-reserve and rules on matters affecting Canadian law, but maintains a separate jurisdiction. The court rules on laws originating from within the community, as well as on laws involving provincial and federal

jurisdiction that have been enacted through the *Indian Act*.

Public security is controlled entirely as an internal jurisdiction by the Mohawks themselves. The **Chief Peacekeeper** works in co-operation with the Mohawk Council in matters affecting public security. These may include such functions as enforcing laws, acting on complaints, and patrolling highways in accordance with the guidelines set out by the province of Quebec. The **Kahnawake Peacekeepers** act as the community's internal police force. They also cooperate with the longhouse **Men's Society** in matters of external security and defence of the territory .

Finally, the **Kahnawake Fire Brigade** helps to assure the safety of the community. It is made up of volunteer members who, in addition to fire-fighting duties, may also be assigned administrative responsibilities or serve in the ambulance division.

### **Three Aspects of Self-Government**

In Kahnawake, the discussion on future forms of self-government focuses on relationships. Progress in the Mohawk mind means movement toward the realignment of political relationships, with the objective of recreating a balanced and respectful sharing of powers and resources. For all its historical underpinnings, Kahnawake's political ideology is essentially future-oriented. It is obsessed with independence and the freedom to choose the terms of the community's collective associations.

The Mohawk concept of self-government is essentially one of maintaining control. As put succinctly by one Mohawk, "Sovereignty means nothing unless it is exercised." The primary distinguishing feature of Kahnawake's conception is its synthesis of principle and practicality. Rooted in the Iroquois tradition, and patterned by Kahnawake's particular historical experience, Mohawk decision makers nonetheless demonstrate a clear willingness to adapt to changing political realities. The adaptive instinct is acknowledged freely; but a distinction is made between the virtue inherent in a willingness to adapt, and the inherent weakness in allowing someone else to dictate the terms of the adaptation.

### *Internal Organization*

Restoring respect and balance among Mohawks is the primary objective in Kahnawake. For the majority of Mohawks, the first step toward an internal reconciliation is the reform of existing



internal governmental institutions. Despite the efforts made by the MCK to create an institutional framework for self-government, it is still perceived as having been only marginally successful. The view is that concrete progress toward sovereignty has been achieved in spite of, rather than because of, the existence of a band council institution linked to the *Indian Act* and the Canadian government. The MCK is seen as problematic in terms of process and representation. The problem lies in its charter as an administrative organ of the Canadian government and a creature of the *Indian Act*. It is simply unacceptable to Mohawks to have a government based on Euro-American laws and principles.

The key to the reform of Kahnawake's internal organization is reintegrating traditional Mohawk values into the political system. There is much division on the structure and format of government, but near unanimity on the necessity of reorienting the decision-making and leadership selection processes to reflect the Mohawk political culture rather than western values. The perception of a uniquely Mohawk or Iroquois set of political values is widespread in Kahnawake. Here the power and influence of the *Kaienerekowa* run deep and represent the only alternative to western politics in the minds of most Kahnawake Mohawks. The modifications made by their ancestors to the ideals of the *Kaienerekowa* have little impact in the face of a resurgence of the Peacemaker's message.

There is an almost dogmatic reverence for the principles established in the *Kaienerekowa*<sup>xvii</sup> by segments of the Mohawk public, but for the majority the principles established in the *Kaienerekowa* can be abstracted to form new rules adapted to the modern age. Mohawk values in politics revolve around two axes, accountability and leadership.

The concept of accountability in Kahnawake is embedded in the simple rule that all power and legitimacy flow from the collective will of the people. Institutions and the actions of leaders alike are held to the standard that near-unanimous consent must be obtained for legitimacy to be granted. It is generally accepted that whatever form of government emerges from the reform of Kahnawake's institutions, it must be one that incorporates all the community's diverse viewpoints and political orientations. This conception may not be radically different from the western concept of consent, but Mohawks demand accountability at every stage in the political process. There is no parallel to the western concept of tacit consent; the public must be consulted constantly and the collective will perpetually gauged to practise government successfully in Kahnawake.

The concept of leadership in Kahnawake again reflects the *Kaienerekowa*. The assumption of a leadership role does not imply elevated status or privilege; on the contrary, leaders are seen as servants of the collective will. Leaders are not so much respected as tolerated by the Mohawk public. Leadership is in every sense of the word a burden, stemming from the mediation function that is the primary occupation of a Mohawk leader. The primacy placed on accountability dictates that government spend most of its time developing consensus, and leaders take on the role of conciliators between various interests and factions within the community.

Within the framework created by the intersection of these two major elements, a number of other values are evident in Kahnawake, but these are considered to have varying degrees of importance by segments of the Mohawk population. Oratorical skills, intelligence, aggressiveness and demonstrated respect for others figure high in the calculation of a leader's worth, for example. But the primacy of accountability and leadership by consensus is well established.

#### *The Indian Act system*

The Mohawk view on the legitimacy of the *Indian Act* illustrates the salience of the two main values in Kahnawake's political ideology. The Mohawks are always insightful and often eloquent in expressing their objections to the imposition of the *Indian Act* and other Canadian laws. The following statements, drawn from interviews conducted for this study, were offered as commentary on the "specific reasons the *Indian Act* system is not an acceptable and legitimate set of rules to govern political life in Kahnawake":

The Indian Act is not acceptable or legitimate because white men made the rules.  
— A Mohawk man

The Indian Act is not acceptable or legitimate because of its implication of assimilation. — A Mohawk woman

It would be acceptable to model a form of government after the Indian Act, but to claim to be sovereign with a form of government developed by Canada is unacceptable. — A young Mohawk woman

The Indian Act is not acceptable because we still ask the government for everything. They control the purse strings, and our lives. — An elderly Mohawk man

The current *Indian Act* regime is clearly unworkable as a framework of government for Kahnawake. But does this necessitate a complete redesign of the mechanism used by Canada to

relate with the community? Most Mohawks think not. While denying the legitimacy of the *Indian Act* in its current form, there is confidence that the federal government can reform the orientation of its Indian affairs bureaucracy to reflect the terms of a new relationship. Among those Mohawks who remain closest to the *Indian Act* in terms of its authority within the community — administrators and directors of the various institutions — there is general agreement that the *Indian Act* must be replaced by a better legislative instrument. At the same time though, there is a hint of caution at the suggestion of a radical disruption to the existing system. These views are evident in the following statements:

The Indian Act needs replacement; it is too confining. It is not a governance tool, it's a limiting device. The only positive aspect is the [exemption from] taxation aspect, and land preservation. Overall, it is a very outdated document. — A Mohawk administrator

...the Indian Act has had a profound effect on us in terms of identity, actual and for membership - and this effect can't be annulled by dismissing the Indian Act. Its like it is 'in us', and we have consented to elements of it. — A Mohawk administrator

The latter statement also represents a rare moment of candour with respect to the internalization of an '*Indian Act* mentality' among the general population in Kahnawake. The administrator commenting on the *Indian Act's* effect recognized the tension that exists between members of the community concerning the movement away from the formal institutions of the *Indian Act* system. Where there is consensus on the need to make such a move, it is based more on an intellectual understanding of the problems of Canada's colonial relationship with Kahnawake than a complete psychological and moral rejection of the *Indian Act*. While there is consensus that the basic premise of the *Indian Act* is flawed, and that it has been applied unevenly and unfairly, some of its constituent institutions and rules are valued.

Over the history of its imposition and application in Kahnawake, Mohawks almost universally have come to integrate various elements of the *Indian Act* system into their political culture. Significant efforts have been made by segments of the community to recognize and address this fact, and an attempt has been made to re-orient values to a more traditional Mohawk ideal. Yet the imposition of this very particular set of western values and institutions has been internalized to the degree that it now presents an obstacle to the reintroduction of a traditional form of government, or even the reform of *Indian Act*-mandated institutions currently existing in the community to reflect a more traditional orientation. The key to overcoming this obstacle

seems to lie in recognizing the fact of internalization and taking steps to reverse the *Indian Act's* erosion of traditional values. Yet the majority of the community is unable to recognize, or unwilling to counteract, the internalization process.

Even among those who have come to recognize the effects of the *Indian Act* in the community, there is a basic disagreement on the nature of the effect on contemporary Mohawks. The starting assumption is that the imposition of the *Indian Act* must be viewed necessarily and absolutely as a negative. In this view, the *Indian Act* is responsible for the destruction of a society and a culture and for the creation of an oppressive system of colonial domination. Others see a somewhat more complex interaction between the community and the *Indian Act*. It is agreed that the net effect of the *Indian Act's* application has been negative, although the *Indian Act* itself in this view constitutes only one of many factors responsible for the erosion of traditional values and Mohawk institutions. Further, it is argued that there are indeed positive elements in the design and application of the *Indian Act* that may be appropriated for use by a Mohawk government in the future.

It is recognized in this view that the *Indian Act* did partially achieve its initial goal of protecting Indian lands from encroachment and still serves as a barrier to the erosion of the Mohawk land base by preventing individual sales and enforcing a jealous federal interest in the territory. Beyond this, the administrative structures and procedures developed to implement the *Indian Act* are seen as useful tools for the administration of a post-*Indian Act* Mohawk government. The basic design of the *Indian Act* system is seen as valid, in that it created a federal responsibility for relating with Indian nations and a structure for managing that federal responsibility. Only as it evolved did the managers of the federal responsibility corrupt the initial instinct to relate on a respectful basis into a self-serving drive for jurisdictional control and political domination. Essentially, this view rejects the assertion that it is necessary to jettison everything and reinvent government; rather it recognizes that internalization is to some degree a fact of life and seeks to build on the acceptable tools within the *Indian Act*. As for the band council system of government now in place at Kahnawake, which is a creature of the *Indian Act* but has made strides toward independence, there is a stronger commitment to a goal of reform rather than elimination or replacement. Mohawks view the current band council administrative apparatus as essentially their own creation, taking into account the modifications that have been made in its structure and philosophy. There is a clear distinction between the two major functions

the band council performs. On one hand, Mohawks see much potential in the further honing of the administrative institution housed in the band council office; yet they reject the legitimacy of the political institution centred around the council table.

In the survey conducted as part of this study, 62 per cent of respondents answered 'no' to the question, "Do you consider Kahnawake's existing band council structure (MCK) to be an appropriate and workable form of government for the community?", and 71 per cent answered 'yes' to the question, "Do you think it is possible to reform Kahnawake's existing band council structure (MCK) to make it an appropriate and workable form of government for the community?"

The assertion that Mohawks make a clear distinction between the administrative and the political with regard to the band council is further supported by their views on the strengths and weaknesses of the current system. As Figure 1 illustrates, most Mohawks consider the band council to be effective in its role as a service provider and administrative centre. They also take a mostly favourable view of the personnel in the band council administration and of Kahnawake's public service organizations. But in the political realm, perceptions of the band council shift toward a negative evaluation. Considering three key elements of the band council's political role, Mohawks evaluate the MCK negatively: the decision-making process; leadership and leadership selection process; and representation.<sup>xviii</sup>

#### *The longhouse alternative*

Various institutions modelled on the traditional Iroquois form of government form constitute what is commonly perceived as the indigenous alternative to the imposed foreign *Indian Act*. At least two separate structures claim to be the legitimate traditional governing authority in Kahnawake. The *Kaienerekowa* serves as the central philosophical and legal tenet for the longhouses, although there is improvisation to varying degrees among the longhouse leadership on matters not explicitly mentioned in the *Kaienerekowa*. While there is a common reverence for and reliance upon the traditional knowledge contained in the *Kaienerekowa*, the consolidation of a hegemonic longhouse governing institution has been precluded.

It is generally believed that the major obstacle preventing the resurrection of a longhouse government for Kahnawake has been disagreements in interpreting the *Kaienerekowa* and personality conflicts among the leadership of the various longhouse groups. This, it is postulated, has kept the longhouse groups divided and allowed the MCK to maintain its status as community government by default. While these may have been important obstacles to political conciliation

in the past — a debatable point, given that all political factions have disagreements and personality conflicts — the simple fact today is that the purist approach to reviving a traditional form of government does not hold mass appeal in Kahnawake.

Most Mohawks recognize that traditionalism means more than erecting structures that imitate old ways of doing things. Here again, political values are important. Mohawks clearly distinguish between form and content, and in their evaluation of the longhouse alternative to the *Indian Act* system they recognize a familiar format vacant of any truly traditional values. Thus for the majority of Mohawks in Kahnawake, the longhouse structures are unauthentic attempts at traditionalism and represent poles of division rather than unifying and constructive forces within the community. In the survey conducted as part of this study, for example, more than half the respondents stated that the MCK needed to be "expanded" or "maintained," while a similar number stated that the Mohawk Nation Office needed to be "eliminated" or "reduced."

The entire strategy of implementing a wholesale replacement of the *Indian Act* with a traditional system is being questioned. The idea of abstracting values from traditional knowledge and integrating them within existing structures has taken on increasing credence. Very few people in Kahnawake deny that "traditional Mohawk laws and structures need to be modified to make them appropriate to our modern situation." Indeed, a minority of respondents to the survey answered 'yes' to the question, "Do you believe that traditional Mohawk laws and structures provide a sound basis for a system of government in Kahnawake?"

One certain indication of the shift in thinking since the process of revitalization began in the 1970s is the current view of the MCK's commitment to reintroducing a traditional form of government. In 1979, the MCK was given a mandate at a public forum, further confirmed in referenda, to "work itself out of a job" and replace the band council with a longhouse government. Whereas the mandate has been accepted for years as a public consensus, many younger Mohawks who did not participate in the original discussions are now questioning the mandate. The events of the 1990 crisis have also shaken the confidence of Kahnawake Mohawks with respect to the capacity of a traditional body to govern the community effectively. Even the limited sample survey conducted as part of this study indicates substantial disagreement with the question of whether the mandate is still valid. A full 55.6 per cent of respondents answered 'no' to the question describing the original mandate and asking, "Do you agree that the 1979 mandate authorizing the Mohawk Council of Kahnawake to make such a change is still valid?"

Another perspective on the internal organization issue comes from Mohawks who view the structural reform as entirely subordinate to the revitalization of the community's values and spiritual health. The following statement is characteristic of the comments offered by those who believe that initiating structural change is premature:

...moving from a Band council system would require a lot of work and input. The community must be prepared. First work on healing ourselves in order to work together...The 1979 MCK mandate is not valid...The primary mandate is reconciliation, the move to a traditional form is secondary. — A Mohawk woman

More than half the respondents to the survey conducted for this study indicated that the pace of change as it has occurred thus far was "too slow". What exists in Kahnawake is a unique combination of a rock solid commitment to the removal of a foreign system and a very diverse set of responses to the question, "What are we going to do about it?" In this study's survey, more than 75 per cent of respondents view Canadian laws as illegitimate in Kahnawake, while at the same time a full 70 per cent of respondents were unable to explain the specific reasons the *Indian Act* was illegitimate.

All these reactions to the events in Kahnawake surrounding efforts to reform the political system represent an ambiguous criticism and impatience. Mohawks are generally critical of efforts undertaken by both the MCK and the longhouse groups. At the same time, they are impatient for the emergence of authentically Mohawk and truly representative institutions. But two definite conclusions can be drawn: (1) Mohawks are demanding a new system of internal organization that synthesizes the best of existing administrative institutions and integrates traditional Mohawk values; and (2) despite the perception that it is a flawed institution, the MCK is seen as the structural framework for a new renewed community government.

### *Jurisdictional Capacity*

Whatever form of internal organization the Mohawks of Kahnawake eventually choose for their community, the replacement of Canadian authority will necessitate a re-evaluation of the community's capacity to supply the financial and human resources for self-government. Reassuming political control will place the burden of administrative and political control on the community's governing institutions. Thus, the Mohawks must consider Kahnawake's jurisdictional capacity — the ability of their community to manage the various aspects of self-government on a financial, administrative and political level.

It is not the intent of this study to perform a detailed analysis of Kahnawake's resources

in consideration of jurisdictional capacity. Rather, this section gauges the confidence of Mohawks with respect to the capacity of Kahnawake to assume control and manage all aspects of self-government. This less tangible aspect is more important than tallying figures on available resources, for it details the framework for co-operation Mohawks are considering. In their move toward reassuming control, what do Mohawks see as the desirable power-sharing arrangement between themselves and Canadian governments? More specifically, this section outlines the limits of co-operation and sharing of resources contemplated by the Mohawks of Kahnawake.

There is a general trepidation in Kahnawake with regard to the community's existing jurisdictional capacity. In four key sectoral areas, Mohawks identified a deficiency in either the natural or human resource potential of the community to become self-sustaining. Considering the four sectors — economy and finance, culture and education, health and social welfare, justice and security — 40 per cent of respondents to the survey selected 'none' in answer to the question, "If Kahnawake received no outside assistance or federal government funding, in which specific areas, if any, do you think the community would be self-sustaining?" Of the four sectors, culture and education received the highest positive response, with a total of only 24.4 per cent. Moreover, only 30.5 per cent of respondents selected 'yes' in answer to the question, "Do you think that Kahnawake today possesses the human and financial resources to sustain its own government and manage its own affairs?"

Mohawks clearly see the need for co-operation with Canadian authorities in the transition to control over their affairs. It is a nearly unanimous view that the move to a restructured form of government should take place gradually rather than as an immediate and wholesale restructuring. The key to this issue is that Mohawks recognize the limits to autonomy imposed by a dearth of resources. Full independence is commonly understood within the community to be the ideal state of affairs for Kahnawake. But completely Mohawk institutions and state-like autonomy are goals whose prospects of achievement must be considered in conjunction with the development of an independent resource base.

There is no contradiction in the majority of Mohawk minds between working toward the ideal of independence and working with Canadian authorities to provide for an interim solution. Although there is some disagreement on the nature and implications of working consciously toward an independent state-like sovereignty in the future, most Kahnawake Mohawks agree that "Kahnawake can be considered sovereign if it relies upon outside governments for the funding of



basic services." The key to understanding this response and concept is that most Mohawks consider government funding to be reparation for previous wrongs committed against the Mohawk people.

The term reparation is appropriate because of the international law implications it carries. In Kahnawake, government transfer payments and funding of social programs are viewed as a form of inter-state foreign aid rather than social assistance. Whether as payment for lands stolen and still illegally occupied, or as reparations for destructive Canadian assimilation policies, Mohawks see the moneys transferred from Ottawa to Kahnawake as small efforts toward the repayment of a huge debt. In the same spirit, there is no gratitude or sense of accountability to Ottawa. The sovereignty question prompted Mohawks to offer a basic perspective on the issue of funding:

We are still sovereign if we rely on government funding because it's owed to us as rent. — A Mohawk man

Kahnawake could still be considered sovereign if it relies on funding, but it depends on what guise it comes to us. Rent, not welfare, is what we should get.

Despite this lack of opposition at the conceptual level to reliance on external sources of funding, it has already been stated that there is a recognition of the need to establish an economic basis for self-government assertions in the political arena. This recognition is more pronounced among the Mohawk administrators working within the community's institutions. They recognize the limitations placed on their freedom of action by external economic control.

In evaluating the funding options usually available for local Aboriginal governments, a self-governing Kahnawake institution is faced with only three existing or foreseeable funding sources: federal transfer payments; local taxes; and the sale or lease of lands. The problem is that Mohawks clearly reject all but federal transfer payments as a fiscal basis for government. The irony of the Mohawk rejection of the *Indian Act's* legitimacy while failing to agree on an alternative legal or philosophical foundation is reflected in the funding issue. But it becomes paradoxical in this case as most Mohawks demand complete autonomy while failing to realize the responsibility inherent in the assumption of control.

As stated earlier, most Mohawks view federal transfer payments as a legitimate means of economic self-sufficiency whether conceived of as transition support or a permanent element of their fiscal plan. They also almost universally reject the idea of local taxes as a potential source of revenue for a future Kahnawake government.<sup>xix</sup> As might be expected given the community's

recent history, not a single survey respondent stated that selling land was an appropriate means of generating revenue. But a large number of Mohawks express their disapproval of even leasing lands to non-Indians in the interests of economic development. Thus the options available for the emerging community government are limited.

One other potential source of revenue generation is available to leaders in Kahnawake. Collective business enterprises form the basis of many successful tribal economies in the United States. Admittedly, tribal governments in the United States have much more flexibility in developing their economies, but Kahnawake has itself had the opportunity to generate revenue through large-scale collectively controlled business enterprises. The attractiveness of this option would seem to be obvious in Kahnawake. But unfortunately Mohawks have consistently rejected any form of organization within the community to implement a collective enterprise on a scale sufficient to provide a resource base for government. There is support in principle for the concept, but in reality every endeavour has been derailed at either the grassroots, administrative or political level.<sup>xx</sup>

The lack of an existing resource base has not deterred Mohawks from developing clear ideas on the proper division of powers between a future self-governing Mohawk institution and external authorities. In eight key areas of jurisdiction, Mohawks have developed priorities for retaining control and dividing control between the local Mohawk government and other agencies representing the authority of external governments. Figure 2 illustrates the primacy Mohawks attach to exclusive control over two areas: land management and membership. It also indicates the level of support for power sharing with other governments in every other area.

The preference in all but one sector (health) is for exclusive Mohawk control, but realizing the deficit Kahnawake faces in terms of professional expertise and skilled labour, most Mohawks are willing to accommodate the idea of shared responsibilities for all but the most critical jurisdictions. Land and membership are singled out because of their significance to the protection of Kahnawake's distinctiveness. As explained earlier, the protection of Kahnawake's land base and distinct identity are recognized by Mohawks to be the community's primary political goals. Therefore these two areas of jurisdiction transcend considerations of financial or administrative expediency. But with respect to the other areas, Kahnawake is open to co-operating with external governments in the provision of basic services and administering the institutions of government. In the survey conducted for this study, fewer than 10 per cent of

respondents stated that it was unacceptable to use non-Indian expertise in administering Mohawk institutions.

In terms of jurisdictional capacity, the view in Kahnawake is that the level of autonomy and self-control achieved do not necessarily have to reflect the community's level of economic self-sufficiency. Indeed, most Mohawks consider continuation of federal transfer payments to be a right. Even those Mohawks who recognize the problems inherent in tying the community's government to the economy and fiscal health of a foreign government see no contradiction in using federal moneys as an interim solution to the problem of a resource deficit in Kahnawake. Having rejected most other means of revenue generation, and relying on an unspecified but implied federal funding obligation, the Mohawks of Kahnawake will obligate their future government to develop a fiscal plan integrating two possible elements: unanimously supported collective business enterprises; and taxation of non-Indian interests and individuals in Kahnawake.

#### *External Relationships*

As is the case with their views in the area of jurisdictional capacity, there is some disparity between the ideal and the practical in Mohawks' views on relationships with other governments. The ideal in Kahnawake is rooted in the concept of the *Kahswentha*, where the Mohawk Nation would relate with others on an equal footing. This nation-to-nation concept is also generally accepted as the ideal relationship between Kahnawake as a community and other governing authorities having an impact on its affairs. The previous section detailed Mohawk views on power sharing with respect to various areas of jurisdictional; this section explains Mohawk views on future political links between their government and Canadian governments.

If the entire self-government process is viewed as a gradual progression toward complete community control over all aspects of its public affairs, then solidifying political links with other communities is the final step in achieving self-government. With its internal organization consolidated, and the issues surrounding jurisdictional capacity resolved, Kahnawake sees the freedom to structure its relations according to its own priorities and interests as the final element in the exercise of its sovereignty.

The vast majority of Mohawks see their future associations as a collectivity within the framework of the Iroquois Confederacy. The old image of an Iroquois people united by the

*Kaienerekowa* and guided in their external relationships by a common Iroquois purpose remains a powerful ideal in Kahnawake. Yet the Iroquois Confederacy has never held widespread political sway in Kahnawake, and except for a minority of the community represented by one of the longhouses, the Mohawks recognize that political reality demands that they focus on Kahnawake as an independent political entity at least during the transition to the ideal. So all the traditional ideas drawn from the *Kahswentha* and the *Kaienerekowa* concerning the nature of the political community and international relations have been recast as guiding principles for Kahnawake rather than the Mohawk Nation. This is not to say that the Mohawks have usurped the role of the Mohawk Nation with respect to the *Kaienerekowa* and traditional Iroquois structures, but political necessity has forced them to shift the level of analysis down to the village from the nation. The common view is that until the Iroquois Confederacy and all other Iroquois communities can agree on a plan to reunite under the traditional institutions, Kahnawake will appropriate for itself those elements of tradition that are valuable in its own efforts to reconstruct a self-governing community.

The central element of the Iroquois tradition in this view is political independence. People in Kahnawake look to their history as Iroquois and as Mohawks specifically for justification of the assertion that political co-operation does not necessarily place limits on the sovereignty of parties to the association facilitating that co-operation. This idea is an Iroquois invention and has inspired the creation of subsequent political associations based on what became known as the federalist model.<sup>xxi</sup> In this way, the Mohawks of Kahnawake evaluate the political landscape and look to advance their interests as a community by creating associations with whatever other political entity exists.

Thus for the Mohawks, co-operating with Canada at present to maintain their community implies no surrender of sovereignty. And the prospect of Canada continuing to occupy a prominent place on that political landscape means only that they will have to continue relating with Canada in the future. There is no internalization of the idea of Canada, no supplanting of Kahnawake's sovereignty by participating in an administrative association with Canadian authorities. This is why the distinction between administrative and political linkages is so important. Throughout its long history as a community — one that began three centuries before Canada's — Kahnawake has never explicitly consented to a surrender of land or any other aspect of its sovereignty. Mohawks take the long view of history and see their current predicament as a

phase in the evolution of their nation, with the only constant being the continuing existence of Kahnawake amidst a succession of larger, more powerful, but shorter lived political entities.

Kahnawake's relationship with the province of Quebec illustrates the Mohawk operationalization of this concept. There is a persistent concern among students of the relationship about the response of Kahnawake Mohawks in the event the province secedes from Canada. The first and most obvious Mohawk response is to question the basic assumption that it is possible for the province to secede from the federation. If there is no legal mechanism within the Constitution of Canada or the body of common law allowing a secession, is separation possible? More important, the province is a constituent element of a federal structure that represents the sovereignty of the Canadian state. It is not a sovereign in itself and thus does not possess title to any of the territory currently administered by its institutions. This is even more pronounced with respect to Indian and Inuit lands within the boundaries of Quebec; as with these other sovereign territories, Kahnawake is not part of Quebec. Thus a movement among the people of Quebec to secede from the federation must not be based upon the creation of a new territorial unit that includes Mohawk lands. Likewise, a movement to create a new form of administering the territory within the province must consider the Mohawks' prior relationship with the government of Canada and their unwillingness to forgo this relationship without substantial reconsideration of their interests and the potential for a better relationship in the future.

Intellectually, the prospect of a new relationship with Quebec does not pose a challenge to the principles that have guided the Mohawks throughout their long interaction with other European societies in North America. In the abstract, the Mohawks would implement the principle of the *Kahswentha* in their relationship with a new neighbouring sovereign entity just as they always have. There is no difference in this respect between their attitude toward the Dutch in the sixteenth century, the English in the seventeenth century, the French in the eighteenth century, the British in the nineteenth century, and Canada in the twentieth century.

On a practical level, the Mohawks discount the idea of secession and are concerned about the impact of the province's drive for increased power within the federation. Especially in the wake of the 1990 crisis, the added factor of Quebec's misplaced obsession with 'law and order' on Indian lands, coupled with a striking ignorance of Mohawk values and principles, led to a breakdown in co-operative relations. The central problem is that as the Mohawks of Kahnawake

continue to gain small measures of success in rectifying their relations with the government of Canada, these gains are offset by consistent efforts on the part of the province to usurp federal and Mohawk authorities and gain jurisdiction over Mohawk lands and people. The Mohawks are aware of the province's objective of centralizing control of Mohawk communities in Quebec City in response to the federal government's projected decentralization and Ottawa's divestiture of Mohawk jurisdictions in favour of Mohawk self-government.

As Figure 3 illustrates, the Mohawks of Kahnawake have clear preferences about the type of political linkages their community government should enter into with other governments.

Most Mohawks recognize the utility of establishing external relationships with every government sharing the political space occupied by Kahnawake. None of the entities listed as options in the survey was rejected outright as a candidate for political linkage with Kahnawake.<sup>xxiii</sup> Given the background to the issue, it is not surprising that there is no special allegiance to Canada in Kahnawake. In fact, despite the existence of a federal fiduciary responsibility, close social and cultural associations between Mohawks and Canadians on an individual level, and the shared historical relationship with Britain, Canada figured no higher than the United States, Britain or any other nation-state.

Survey respondents were asked to rate their preference for establishing external relationships with various political entities. They were also asked to indicate whether the relationship should be a "full", "partial" or "limited" linkage. Most respondents stated a preference for either full or partial linkage with Canada, the United States and other nation-states. In considering the stated preference for full linkage only, Canada (54 per cent) registered only slightly higher than the United States (43 per cent) and other nation-states (38 per cent).

This is in clear contrast to the Mohawk view on relationships with other Aboriginal nations and the Iroquois Confederacy. The Mohawk view of their own sovereignty is obviously transferred to other Aboriginal communities. A full 93 per cent of respondents indicated that there should be full or partial linkages with both the Iroquois Confederacy and other Aboriginal communities. The Iroquois Confederacy and other Aboriginal communities are the clear choice in Kahnawake as the linchpins of a network of future external relations.

The prevailing view on external relationships is expressed in the comments offered by a

longhouse leader:

We should establish relationships with whoever we wish. A full relationship does not mean a loss of jurisdiction or sovereignty but can enhance both. — A Mohawk man

### **The Meaning of Self-Government in Kahnawake**

In Kahnawake, Aboriginal self-government means progress toward the ideal of complete autonomy and the realization of the Mohawk right to self-determination. The term self-government as it is used in the public discourse on Aboriginal rights and constitutionalism in Canada, even at its most expansive, is unacceptable as an ultimate objective for the Mohawks of Kahnawake. Any conceptualization of a relationship between Mohawks and other peoples that denies the rights of the Mohawk Nation in the interests of securing the power and authority of another nation will not be tolerated. Mohawks see the consideration of self-government arrangements as part of the inevitable process of divesting themselves of colonial status and regaining the status of an independent sovereign nation. Thus self-government means simply regaining control over the processes and powers of governance as an interim measure to the eventual objective of autonomy.

The use of the term 'sovereignty' is itself problematic, as it skews the terms of the debate in favour of the European conception of a proper relationship. In adopting the English language as a means of communication, Aboriginal peoples have been compromised to a certain degree, in that accepting the language means accepting basic premises developed in European thought and reflected in the debate surrounding the issue of sovereignty in general and Aboriginal or Native sovereignty in particular. The premises of this debate are outdated even in the non-Aboriginal context. How many states today are independent to the degree that they have effective and exclusive control over their economic and political relations with other states? Without that insulated form of independence in the economic and political sphere, the term sovereignty is inappropriate as an analytical tool in the contemporary era. Yet the sovereignty ideal continues to provide a framework for considering goals and strategies within the Aboriginal community.

Indian and Inuit peoples should not be saddled with the burden of conforming to a European institutional and legal model to justify their assertions of nationhood. In Kahnawake, the conventional use of the term sovereignty has been abandoned in favour of an indigenous reformulation. While the English word is maintained, the content of the definition is being

replaced by Mohawk ideas, with the objective of moving beyond 'sovereignty' as just the closest approximation of an indigenous idea. The indigenous idea itself is being expressed, and 'sovereignty' is being redefined in the process. Sovereignty for the Mohawks of Kahnawake is represented by the Mohawk language word *Tewatatowie*, which translates as "we help ourselves".

There is a strong sense of self-sufficiency and independence in the political usage of *Tewatatowie*, particularly as it relates to group interactions with other communities. The word itself is used in Mohawk-language philosophical rhetoric and is linked to concepts contained in the *Kaienerekowa*. Thus Mohawk sovereignty is conceived of not only in terms of interests and boundaries, but in terms of land, relationships and spirituality. Locating the Mohawk definition of sovereignty in this context, it is easier to discern its essence. The idea of balance among people and communities is pervasive in Mohawk culture and spirituality; the achievement of a balanced relationship based upon respect for differences, whether among individuals or communities, is valued as the achievement of a harmonious ideal state of affairs. The essence of Mohawk sovereignty is harmony. Through its linkage to the *Kaienerekowa*, the concept is endowed with a spiritual power that precludes the compromise of the ideal in the interests of political expediency or power calculations. A balanced and respectful relationship among each other (the people), between the Mohawk people and the earth (land), and between the Mohawk people and other communities forms the ideal represented in the Mohawk use of the term 'sovereignty'.

There is a keen sense history in Kahnawake, and most Mohawks are aware of the path their community has taken from autonomous nationhood to wardship under Canadian institutions. This history reflects consistent rebuttals of their attempts to operationalize the ideal of harmonious co-existence within the framework of the Canada-Kahnawake relationship. Canadians are also aware of the history of the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal societies. But where the majority of Canadians wish to see Aboriginal societies integrated within the social and political framework they have created, Mohawks at least reject the idea of buying into what are essentially foreign institutions. They have recognized the political realities and the necessity of co-operating with Canadian authorities to create institutions and arrangements that will afford the community control over its internal organization, expanded jurisdictional powers and more flexible external relationships. Canadians



perceive these as ultimate objectives; Mohawks assuredly do not.

Having a clear sense of their absolute objective does not cause the Mohawks of Kahnawake to develop tunnel vision with respect to the interim measures. Without prejudice to nationalistic goals, Kahnawake is aggressive in pursuing pragmatic arrangements to ensure that the community achieves a level of security and prosperity in the meantime. Despite the fears of some persons within and outside their community, Kahnawake's solutions in the short and mid-term do not include a radical reintroduction of an ancient social or political order. The vast majority of Mohawks feel unprepared culturally to take on the task of recreating a purely traditional society at this point. The consensus interim goal is a synthesis of the familiar with elements of the traditional into a workable and appropriate institutional framework to confront the current political reality facing the community.

Self-government as a long-term goal in Kahnawake is based explicitly on traditional concepts reflected in its political culture. In the short and mid-term as well, the principles contained in the *Kaienerekowa* and *Kahswentha* are implemented as much as possible. The common element on the continuum from short- to long-term goals is maintenance of a position of sovereignty. Whether agreeing to a funding arrangement to build a hospital in 1985, or entering into formal community-based self-government negotiations in 1991, Mohawks have maintained consistently that their efforts to improve life in Kahnawake should in no way be interpreted as consent to the legitimacy of Canadian institutions.

In the effort to build lasting respect, the major obstacle Mohawks and Canadians face is essentially conceptual: they hold radically different ideas of Canada. Conceptually, Canada may be a nation, or it may be a political framework for co-operation between nations. For most Canadians it is both. For most Mohawks it is at best only the latter. The people of Kahnawake have allegiance solely to the Mohawk Nation, and their view of the Mohawk Nation is one in the fullest sense of the term as it is used in international law. This is in contrast to the illogical current Aboriginal usage — First Nations — which in fact refers to bands within the meaning of the *Indian Act*. The difference in usage highlights the hegemonic influence of Canada as nation even in Aboriginal circles. By accepting the label, the so-called First Nations have in fact consented to being an integral element of the Canadian nation. But the Mohawks' nationality is rooted in their distinctive concept of sovereignty.

With this fact well established within the community, Kahnawake is limited in how far it

can proceed in a partnership with Canada. Canadians would seek to bring Mohawks as full members into the nation they have created, while Kahnawake Mohawks must as citizens resist the attempt to erode their Mohawk institutions and identity. From the Mohawk perspective the problem is a lack of respect for the sovereignty of the Mohawk nation. They hope for a partnership with Canada that recognizes the limits of their alliance rooted in their political philosophy, while still allowing both Canadians and Mohawks to benefit from the association.

Again from the Mohawk perspective, there is plenty of room for manoeuvre in the Canada-Kahnawake relationship without compromising Mohawk sovereignty. Kahnawake as a community of the Mohawk Nation is vested with considerable local autonomy. This allows for substantial progress toward what may be termed self-government: enhanced local control and co-operation in the administration of the institutions that affect life in Kahnawake, without prejudice to larger issues of sovereignty and broader political associations. This short- and mid-term progress would then feed into an expanded conception of self-government in the long term that would respect Mohawk national sovereignty and the right to self-determination. The expanded concept would not necessarily preclude further co-operation between Canada and the Mohawks. It may in fact promote co-operation by forcing a negotiated power-sharing agreement and mutual recognition of jurisdictional control and delegated responsibility.

For the Mohawks issues of sovereignty are non-negotiable and the long-term relationship between Canada and the Mohawk Nation remains unsettled. But self-government as a short- and mid-term measure is a clear priority and within the purview of the MCK or any other institution that will be designed to represent the Mohawks of Kahnawake. Given this, the condition for immediate progress is simple: a federal willingness to allow Mohawk control and local authority to grow on a practical level unopposed. The prerequisite for a lasting solution is more complicated: a federal recognition of Mohawk sovereignty on a conceptual level, with the negotiation of power-sharing arrangements within the context of community capabilities and federal treaty obligations on a nation-to-nation basis.

### **Rebuilding the Relationship**

Several conclusions emerge from a consideration of the information presented in this study. The conclusions may be thought of in terms of recommendations for the formation of public policy. But optimally, the conclusions form a set of reference points for community discussion and

guideposts for community action within Kahnawake. Federal and provincial governments as well may benefit from the insight into the key issues facing the Mohawks of Kahnawake. Yet it will ultimately be the responsibility of those other political communities to develop the will to respect and co-exist with the Mohawks, who will continue to develop along a path chosen by Mohawks themselves. Despite the progress that makes Kahnawake stand out in many ways, both within the community of Kahnawake itself and between the Mohawks and their neighbours, there is much work left to be done if relationships embodying the ideals of respect and harmony are to be rebuilt.

### *Initiate a Process of Political Education*

The Mohawks of Kahnawake are an intensely political people, yet most lack a fundamental knowledge of the two basic elements of their political lives: the *Kaienerekowa* and the *Indian Act*. Leaders of both the band council and the longhouses are quite familiar with the basis for their own institutions but equally ignorant of the other system's. Outside the leadership ranks, and aside from the basic tenets of the Mohawk philosophy, which are inculcated through socialization, the largest share of information concerning both traditional institutions and the *Indian Act* is derived from media sources, hearsay or politically motivated misinformation. The people of Kahnawake must initiate a process of political education that aims to provide a deeper understanding of Mohawk traditions and the current system of external controls preventing the operation of those traditions in Kahnawake. The focus must be on going beyond the facile and superficial stage of revitalization. At present, most Mohawks who are committed to learning Mohawk traditions are schooled in the mechanics of reintroducing old forms and structures. This in contrast to relearning philosophical principles and reintegrating traditional values into their lives.

The people of Kahnawake must also turn some attention to educating Canadians about the basis of their political objectives. The power disparity between the Mohawks of Kahnawake and the government of Canada is such that the onus for action is placed upon the Mohawks in the process of reconciliation. While Mohawks by default must learn the history and culture of western society in general and Canada in particular, Canadians themselves are almost completely ignorant concerning the history of the relationship between Mohawks and other political communities and not intellectually prepared to make informed decisions on issues of mutual

concern. By instituting a program to educate and inform Canadians, Mohawks may in effect promote mutual understanding and help bridge the obstacles preventing the achievement of their goals.

### *Recognize and Counteract the Destructive Effects of Individualism*

The most pervasive legacy of the *Indian Act* in Kahnawake is the erosion of Mohawk communalism. To be sure, the orientation of political values in Kahnawake reflects a sense of community to a much greater degree than non-Aboriginal political communities. But Mohawks must recognize the negative effects of a concerted federal assimilation policy and the overarching influence of western culture on Mohawk society. Today and in recent history, many Mohawks have abandoned a consideration of common interest in favour of achieving individual gains defined in western terms. The attitude of many Mohawks toward land ownership, and a general reluctance to support the institutions of Mohawk government with their own financial resources, are clear evidence of the decline of communal values. Kahnawake was devastated by Mohawks accepting certificates of possession for their formerly communal land holdings during the federal government's drive to expropriate Mohawk territory for the construction of the St. Lawrence Seaway. Selfish or uninformed individualism must not be allowed to create fault lines within the community as Kahnawake faces challenges to its sovereignty and collective right to self-determination on key issues such as membership policy and the application of a western charter of rights and freedoms to Mohawk institutions and people.

### *Demonstrate Respect for Mohawk Traditions and Values*

All Mohawks profess a respect for the *Kaienerekowa* and to varying degrees reflect that profession in their lives. But the community as a collective must demonstrate and act on the respect for the values enshrined in the *Kaienerekowa* by developing the political will to reintroduce a tradition-based form of government. The government of Canada, as well, must recognize the viability of these institutions and respect the Mohawks' desire to implement them as basic elements in the reorganization of their political system.

### *Validate the Ideal of a Revitalized Iroquois Confederacy*

Mohawks must work toward strengthening the links that now exist between Kahnawake and the other nations and Grand Council of the Iroquois Confederacy. The community formed by

Confederacy members is an immense resource, in terms of both cultural knowledge and political support, that Kahnawake can not afford to neglect. Despite the local orientation and village level nationalism of most Kahnawake Mohawks, there is room for closer co-operation with other Iroquois peoples and the development of an Iroquois consensus in the identification of key interest and identity issues. There is a singular energy in Kahnawake that can be channelled toward the strengthening the locus and central element of Kahnawake's tradition.

*Promote a Reciprocal Respect for the Kahswentha*

Mohawks must work to promote the ideal of harmonious co-existence as a core element in the relationship between Canada and Kahnawake. The historical lack of respect by the government of Canada for Mohawk values has forced Mohawks into the position of developing other means of achieving the elements of Mohawk sovereignty. Self-sufficiency and political independence have not been abandoned despite the government of Canada's attempts to subvert these Mohawk goals. All the conflicts that arise between the Mohawks of Kahnawake and other political communities derive from failures on the part of either the federal or provincial governments to respect Mohawk sovereignty and the principle of non-coercive and non-interfering co-operation.

**NIA:WENKOWA**

**Notes**



THE STRUCTURAL FOUNDATION OF SELF-GOVERNMENT

**General**

5. **What are the values and characteristics that you think should be incorporated into a Mohawk government?**

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY:

- 1) CONSENSUS
- 2) ACCOUNTABILITY
- 3) TRADITIONAL CULTURE
- 4) SPIRITUALITY
- 5) RESPECT
- 6) COMMUNITY CONSULTATION
- 7) OTHER (Please List)

**Indian Act Government**

6. **Do you consider the *Indian Act* and other Canadian laws to be legitimate rules to govern political life in Kahnawake?**

- 1) YES (Skip to Question 9)
- 2) NO (Answer Questions 7-8)

7. IF ANSWER IS "NO" TO QUESTION # 6:

**Do you think that the *Indian Act* system is capable of being reformed into an acceptable and legitimate system of rules to govern political life in Kahnawake?**

- 1) YES
- 2) NO

8. IF ANSWER IS "NO" TO QUESTION # 6:

**What are the specific reasons the *Indian Act* system is not an acceptable and legitimate set of rules to govern political life in Kahnawake?**

9. **Do you consider Kahnawake's existing Band Council structure (MCK) to be an appropriate and workable form of government for the community?**

- 1) YES (Skip to Question 12)
- 2) NO (Answer Questions 10-11)

10. IF ANSWER IS "NO" TO QUESTION # 9:

**Do you think it is possible to reform the Kahnawake's existing Band Council structure (MCK) to make it an appropriate and workable form of government for the community?**

- 1) YES
- 2) NO

11. IF ANSWER IS "NO" TO QUESTION # 9:

**What aspects of the existing Band Council structure (MCK) make it inappropriate and unworkable as a form of government for the community?**

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY:

- 1) DECISION-MAKING PROCESS
- 2) REPRESENTATION
- 3) SERVICE DELIVERY
- 4) PERSONNEL
- 5) LEADERSHIP SELECTION
- 6) OTHER (Please List)

12. **In which, if any, areas does the existing Band Council structure (MCK) function effectively as a form of government for the community?**

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY:

- 1) DECISION-MAKING PROCESS
- 2) REPRESENTATION
- 3) SERVICE DELIVERY
- 4) PERSONNEL
- 5) LEADERSHIP SELECTION
- 6) NONE / OTHER (Please List)

### **Institutions**

**There are a number of organizations and structures which have been established in Kahnawake. The move to self-government will entail a restructuring of existing organizations. The authority and scope of operations of the various organizations may be expanded, maintained as is, reduced, or the organization may be eliminated entirely.**

PLEASE INDICATE YOUR OPINION ON THE FUTURE SCOPE AND AUTHORITY OF THESE INSTITUTIONS BY PLACING AN "X" IN THE APPROPRIATE SPACE:



**1)EXPANDED**

**2)MAINTAINED**

**3)REDUCED 4)ELIMINATED**

**13. Mohawk Council**

**14. Mohawk Nation Office**

**15. Peacekeepers**

**16. Caisse Populaire**

**17. Social Services**

**18. Economic Development  
(K.E.D.A.)**

**19. Social Assistance  
(Welfare)**

**20. Court of Kahnawake**

### **The Longhouse System**

**21. Are you in favour of Kahnawake moving away from the Band Council system and towards a form of government based on traditional Mohawk values and structures?**

- 1) YES
- 2) NO

**22. What is the level of your understanding of traditional Mohawk political principals and values, or of a traditional Mohawk form of government?**

SELECT ONLY ONE ANSWER:

- 1) COMPLETE UNDERSTANDING OF ALL ASPECTS
- 2) GOOD UNDERSTANDING OF MOST ASPECTS
- 3) LIMITED UNDERSTANDING
- 4) NO UNDERSTANDING

**23. Do you believe that traditional Mohawk laws and structures provide a sound basis for a system of government in Kahnawake?**

- 1) YES
- 2) NO

24. **Do you think that traditional Mohawk laws and structures need to be modified to make them appropriate to our modern situation?**

- 1) YES (Answer Question 25)
- 2) NO (Skip to Question 26)

25. IF ANSWER IS "YES" TO QUESTION # 24:

**In what areas do traditional Mohawk laws and structures need to be modified to make them appropriate to our modern situation?**

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY:

- 1) CLAN SYSTEM
- 2) ROLE OF WOMEN
- 3) DECISION-MAKING PROCESS
- 4) LEADERSHIP SELECTION
- 5) OTHER (Please List)

#### **Mandate and Time Frame**

26. **In 1979, the Mohawk Council of Kahnawake (MCK) was given a mandate by the community to move away from the *Indian Act* and re-establish a traditional form of Mohawk government in Kahnawake. Do you agree that the 1979 mandate authorizing the Mohawk Council of Kahnawake to make such a change is still valid?**

- 1) YES
- 2) NO

27. **What is your view on the pace of change in Kahnawake's political structures as it has occurred so far?**

SELECT ONLY ONE ANSWER:

- 1) TOO SLOW
- 2) APPROPRIATE
- 3) TOO FAST

28. **When do you think the reformation of Kahnawake's institutions should take place?**

SELECT ONLY ONE ANSWER:

- 1) AS SOON AS POSSIBLE
- 2) WITHIN 5 YEARS

- 3) WITHIN 10 YEARS
- 4) OVER A LONG PERIOD OF TIME

29. **What is your view on how the changes should be implemented?**

SELECT ONLY ONE ANSWER:

- 1) AS A GRADUAL TRANSITION
- 2) ALL AT ONCE

JURISDICTIONAL CAPACITY

30. **Do you think that Kahnawake today possesses the human and financial resources to sustain its own government and manage its own affairs?**

- 1) YES
- 2) NO

31. **If Kahnawake received no outside assistance or federal government funding, in which specific areas, if any, do you think the community would be self-sustaining?**

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY:

- 1) ECONOMY AND FINANCES
- 2) CULTURE AND EDUCATION
- 3) HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE
- 4) JUSTICE AND SECURITY
- 5) NONE

32. **In which of the following specific areas do you feel it is acceptable for Kahnawake to utilize non-Indian expertise and employ non-Indian skilled individuals?**

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY:

- 1) ECONOMY AND FINANCES
- 2) CULTURE AND EDUCATION
- 3) HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE
- 4) JUSTICE AND SECURITY
- 5) NONE

33. **Do you think that Kahnawake can be considered sovereign if it relies upon outside governments for the funding of basic services?**

- 1) YES
- 2) NO

34. **What means should a Mohawk government use to sustain itself financially?**

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY:

- 1) FEDERAL TRANSFER PAYMENTS
- 2) COLLECTIVE BUSINESS ENTERPRISES
- 3) TAXING MOHAWK BUSINESSES
- 4) TAXING MOHAWK INDIVIDUALS
- 5) TAXING MOHAWK LANDS
- 6) TAXING NON-MOHAWK INTERESTS AND INDIVIDUALS
- 7) OTHER (Please List)

35. **Do you think that Kahnawake should move away from the *Indian Act* and toward a system of land ownership based on full Mohawk ownership and responsibility?**

- 1) YES
- 2) NO

36. **What type of land regime should a Mohawk government implement in Kahnawake?**

SELECT ONLY ONE ANSWER:

- 1) RE-IMPLEMENT COLLECTIVE OWNERSHIP OF ALL LANDS
- 2) FULLY IMPLEMENT A SYSTEM OF INDIVIDUAL OWNERSHIP
- 3) OTHER (Please List)

37. **Do you think that a land regime under a Mohawk government should allow for Mohawk lands to be leased or sold to non-Indian interests?**

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY:

- 1) LEASED
- 2) SOLD
- 3) NEITHER

38. **Do you think that the Canadian Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs should continue to determine who is and is not a member of the Mohawks of Kahnawake?**

- 1) YES (Skip to Question 40)
- 2) NO (Answer Question 39)

39. IF ANSWER IS "NO" TO QUESTION # 38:

**Who do you think should develop membership criteria and determine who is and who is not a member of the Mohawks of Kahnawake?**

SELECT ONLY ONE ANSWER:

- 1) MOHAWK COUNCIL OF KAHNAWAKE
- 2) LONGHOUSE CHIEFS AND CLANMOTHERS
- 3) A NEW STRUCTURE DESIGNED TO GOVERN MEMBERSHIP
- 4) OTHER (Please List)

POWER-SHARING AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS

**Kahnawake as a self-governing community will continue to have administrative relations with other governments and communities. And as with all communities and nations, in various areas of authority, control will be exercised in different ways. Some jurisdictional areas will be controlled by Kahnawake alone, in other areas control will be shared with outside governments, and in others control will be wholly delegated to outside governments through power-sharing agreements.**

INDICATE YOUR OPINION ON POWER-SHARING ARRANGEMENTS IN THE VARIOUS AREAS BY PLACING AN "X" IN THE APPROPRIATE SPACE:

1) KAHNAWAKE 2) SHARED 3) FED/PROV

40. Land Management and Control
41. Justice
42. Membership
43. Health & Social Services
44. Education & Cultural Matters
45. Infrastructure & Housing
46. Environment/Natural Resources
47. Commerce/Taxation/Moneys
48. Financial Institutions

**Kahnawake as a self-governing community will continue to have political relations with other governments and communities. The level of political linkage between Kahnawake and various other governments will vary.**

INDICATE YOUR OPINION ON THE TYPE OF EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND POLITICAL LINKAGES KAHNAWAKE SHOULD HAVE WITH OTHER GOVERNMENTS BY PLACING AN "X" IN THE APPROPRIATE SPACE:

FULL PARTIAL LIMITED

49. Government of Canada
50. Government of Quebec
51. Iroquois Confederacy
52. Other Aboriginal Communities  
(Indian, Inuit and Metis)
53. The United States
54. Other Nation-States

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iThe survey was designed to sample opinion within the community on key questions concerning the future development of political institutions within the community. With this objective in mind, the conduct of the survey was geared toward those Mohawks who would be willing to contribute suggestions or constructive criticism on the self-government process. Thus the survey was weighted heavily toward a younger, female and at least minimally educated segment of the population. The survey is a sampling of approximately 3 per cent of Kahnawake's adult population (62 respondents) in the following demographic categories: 58.1 per cent female and 41.9 per cent male; 42.6 per cent from 15 to 30 years old, 54.1 per cent from 30 to 65 years old, and 3.3 per cent over 65 years old; 35.5 per cent with some college education and 14.5 per cent possessing a university degree. Survey respondents were guaranteed anonymity and were not compensated in any way for their participation in the research. Survey respondents were selected by the principal researcher based on the need for a broad representation of diversity in terms of demographics, political affiliation and occupation.

iiFor more background on the various structures and institutions operating in Kahnawake, see The Mohawk Council of Kahnawake, *Institutions of Mohawk Government in Kahnawake: An Overview*, 2nd Edition (Kahnawake: 1990).

iii For a discussion of the pre-contact Mohawk economy and relations with other native nations, as well as territorial issues, see Cadwallader Colden, [1727-1747] *History of the Five Nations Depending on the Province of New-York in America* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1958); William Englebrecht, "New York Iroquois Political Development", in *Cultures in Contact: The Impact of European Contacts on Native American Cultural Institutions, a.d. 1000-1800*, ed. William Fitzhugh (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1985); William N. Fenton, "Mohawk", in *Northeast*, vol. 15 of *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. Bruce Trigger (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1978); Charles T. Gehring, *A Journey Into Mohawk and Oneida Country, 1634-1635: The Journal of Harmen Meyndertszden Bogaert* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1988); Dean R. Snow, "Iroquois Prehistory", in *Extending the Rafters: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Iroquoian Studies*, ed. Michael K. Foster (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984); and Bruce G. Trigger, *The Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron People to 1660*, 2 volumes (Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1976).

ivThis concept is derived from an archeologist's recent explanation of the confusing occurrence of Iroquois material artifacts throughout a large region never permanently settled by Iroquois. See Claude Chapdelaine, "Poterie, Ethnicité et Laurentie Iroquoienne", in *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec* 21/1-2 (1991), 44-52.

vFor a discussion of Iroquois political organization and thought, see Daniel K. Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: the Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); and Francis Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire: The Covenant Chain Confederation of Indian Tribes with English Colonies from its Beginning to the Lancaster Treaty of 1744* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1984).

viArthur C. Parker, *The Constitution of the Five Nations or The Iroquois Book of the Great Law* (Albany, N.Y.: The University of the State of New York, 1916).

viiFrancis S. Jennings, *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy: An Interdisciplinary Guide to the Treaties of the Six Nations and Their League* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1985); Tehanetorens, *Wampum Belts* (Onchiota, N.Y.: Six Nations Indian Museum, 1972).

viiiFor a discussion of the early settlement of Kahnawake, see Henri Bechard, *The Original Caughnawaga Indians* (Montreal: International Publishers, 1976); David Scott Blanchard, "Patterns of Tradition and Change: The Re-Creation of Iroquois Culture at Kahnawake", Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1982; David Blanchard, "To the Other Side of the Sky: Catholicism at Kahnawake, 1667-1700", *Anthropologica* 24 (1982), 77-102; Lucien Campeau, "Roman Catholic Missions in New France", in *History of Indian-White Relations*, vol. 4 of *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. Wilcomb E. Washburn (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1988); E.J. Devine, *Historic Caughnawaga* (Montreal: The Messenger Press, 1922).

ixFenton, "Mohawk", cited in note 3; Grassman, *The Mohawk Indians and their Valley: Being a Chronological Documentary Record to the End of 1693* (Albany, N.Y.: Magi Books, 1969).

xFor a discussion of the movement of Mohawks from the Mohawk River to the St. Lawrence River settlement, and of the character of the new community, see Blanchard, "To the Other Side of the Sky", cited in note 8; Campeau, "Roman Catholic Missions in New France", cited in note 8; Gretchen Lynn Green, "A New People in an Age of War: The Kahnawake Iroquois, 1667-1760", doctoral dissertation, The College of William and Mary, 1991; and Ruben Gold Thwaites, ed. *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents:*

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*Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610-1791 (1896-1901)*, 73 volumes, reprinted facsimile in 36 volumes (New York: Pageant Book Co., 1959).

<sup>xi</sup>Denys Delâge, "Les Iroquois Chrétien des `Réductions,' 1667-1770: I - Migration et Rapports avec les Français", *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec* 21/1-2 (1991), 59-70; Denys Delâge, "Les Iroquois Chrétien des `Réductions,' 1667-1770: II - Rapports avec la Ligue Iroquoise, les Britanniques et les autres nations autochtones", *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec* 21/3 (1991), 39-50; Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire*, cited in note 5; Thomas Eliot Norton, *The Fur Trade in Colonial New York, 1686-1776* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974).

<sup>xii</sup>George F.G. Stanley, "The Significance of Six Nations' Participation in the War of 1812", *Ontario History* 55 (1963), 215-231; Robert J. Surtees, "The Iroquois in Canada", in Jennings, *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy*, cited in note 7.

<sup>xiii</sup>For a discussion of the Mohawks' role in various military expeditions in the nineteenth century, see Thomas Donaldson, "Indians: The Six Nations of New York", in *11th United States Census*, Extra Census Bulletin (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1892); Jack A. Frisch, "The Iroquois Indians and the 1855 Franklin Search Expedition of the Arctic", *Indian Historian* 8/1 (1975), 27-30; and C.P. Stacey, ed. *Records of the Nile Voyageurs, 1884-1885: The Canadian Voyageur Contingent in the Gordon Relief Expedition* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1959).

<sup>xiv</sup>Mary Carse, "The Mohawk Iroquois", *The Archeological Society of Connecticut Bulletin* 23 (1949), 3-53; Devine, *Historic Caughnawaga*, cited in note 8.

<sup>xv</sup>For a discussion of the evolution of *Indian Act* authority in Kahnawake, see Blanchard, "Patterns of Tradition and Change", cited in note 8; and C.H. Taggart, *Caughnawaga Indian Reserve: Report, General and Final* (Ottawa: Department of Mines and Resources, 1948).

<sup>xvi</sup>For a discussion of the Seaway and Kahnawake's efforts to block its construction, see Lionel Chevrier, *The St. Lawrence Seaway* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1959); Omar Z. Ghobashy, *The Caughnawaga Indians and the St. Lawrence Seaway* (New York: Devin-Adair, 1961); Carleton Mabee, *The Seaway Story* (New York: Macmillan, 1961).

<sup>xvii</sup>It should be noted that there are at least four different versions of the *Kaienerekowa* in circulation today. Originally an oral document, it was translated into written form during the nineteenth century by various interpreters. A version transcribed by Seth Newhouse in 1903 remains the one most closely adhered to by most of the Iroquois longhouses. The central core of the story remains consistent, but there is much disparity in emphasis and detail, which has led to disagreement among the Iroquois as to the specific content of the *Kaienerekowa* as a `law', particularly in the effort to make it a set of guiding rules for government in the contemporary era. There remains one individual, Cayuga elder Jacob Thomas, capable of reciting the oral version from memory. For a discussion of the *Kaienerekowa's* various interpretations, see Christopher Vecsey, *Imagine Ourselves Richly: Mythic Narratives of North American Indians* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991).

<sup>xviii</sup>At least one respondent took a unique perspective on the strengths and weaknesses of the Band Council structure in Kahnawake. Citing the difference of opinion concerning the legitimacy of the *Indian Act* and the overall ineffectiveness of the MCK as a political institution, the young woman celebrated the status quo, stating, "It engenders opposition and critical thinking/action in the community. In this way promoting diversity — part of what defines Kahnawake and makes it a dynamic and exciting place in the political landscape."

<sup>xix</sup>There is some support for the idea of imposing taxes on non-Mohawk individuals and business interests within Kahnawake (29.2 per cent of survey respondents). This serves to illustrate the ideological aspect of the tax issue in Kahnawake. One of the prevailing myths in the community is that `Indians don't pay tax.' This of course flows from the effect of a partial integration of *Indian Act* rules in the community. The tax exemption granted in the *Indian Act* is perceived as a treaty right due all Indians by virtue of their status as members. Another aspect is that Mohawks recognize the correlation between the legitimacy of taxes and the existence of a representative and effective government. Most Mohawks reject the idea of taxes at least in part because existing government institutions are viewed as neither truly representative, stable nor effective.

<sup>xx</sup>Kahnawake has failed to support a number of proposed enterprises: a lacrosse stick manufacturing plant in partnership with an American company; a warehousing and air freight centre in partnership with another Aboriginal nation; a shopping complex; and, most recently, a tourism plan involving a hotel and casino complex in partnership with an American company. In each case, community ratification of a proposal put forward by the MCK was withheld. Community ratification is usually gained through a public

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meeting at which an issue is discussed and decided on by consensus — although in the case of the gaming proposal, a formal referendum was held at which voters expressed their opinion by means of a private ballot.

<sup>xxi</sup>For a discussion of the Iroquois Confederacy's influence on federalism, see Donald A. Grinde, Jr. and Bruce E. Johansen, *Exemplar of Liberty: Native America and the Evolution of Democracy* (Los Angeles: AISC, UCLA, 1991); and Bruce E. Johansen, *Forgotten Founders: How the American Indian Helped Shape Democracy* (Boston: The Harvard Common Press, 1982).

<sup>xxii</sup>It is clear that Mohawks do not consider Quebec an important element in the make-up of Kahnawake's future external relations. The prevailing view in the community is that Quebec is simply a sub-unit of the Canadian federal state. Quebec's provincial status precludes its consideration as an independent political entity. This is reflected in the wide margin of difference between the number of survey respondents who favoured full or partial linkages with other entities (from 85 per cent to 93 per cent) and those who favoured full or partial linkages with Quebec (55 per cent).