

*It is time for the DNR to recognize that the old ways of laissez-faire fishery management are due for change.*

It is time for the DNR to recognize that the old ways of laissez-faire fishery management are due for change. New systems are needed for monitoring and managing the fishery, and local participation in sharing responsibility for management is the key to this future. Tribal involvement in resource management provides an example for developing this type of sharing of responsibility.

With the legal recognition of treaty right, tribes have been establishing new fish and wildlife management programs, and trying to find proper roles and financial support for these programs. The DNR has been forced to learn new ways of operating, including coordination and cooperation with tribes, what some people call co-management.

On the Great Lakes, the tribal status as co-manager has become an institution. Indian tribes with treaty fisheries have taken on the responsibilities of licensing, regulators, and monitoring their own fisheries. The treaty tribes are represented at all levels in the committee structure of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission. Tribal biologists have made important contributions to inter-agency management plans, and to the biological data required to carry out such plans. Tribal leaders have developed experience in setting management policies and in negotiating with states and competing user groups.

But what does co-management mean when applied to the northern Wisconsin fishery? Specifically, the DNR should utilize the fisheries as a source of data on the fish populations, as they do with deer. The DNR should require guides to report their catches, as they are already required to do on the Great Lakes. The DNR should require muskies to be registered, along with sturgeon, deer, bears, and other directly regulated species. The DNR should set up registration stations at resorts, where guests would document the fish they have killed. The DNR should utilize the growing tournament circuit as a source of biological data. The DNR should establish cooperative agreements with tribes, lake associations, and sporting clubs to monitor fish populations and their harvest. And with or without the involvement of DNR, the tribes and local groups should cooperate on projects of common interest to protect, enhance, or just enjoy the fishery resources.

Co-management must be an inclusive process; it has been described as power-sharing. Through tribal, and other local, participation in fishery management decisions, Wisconsin's fishing communities can enter into a new era of cooperation, trust, and accountability. This is the promise of co-management which has been made possible by the affirmation and exercise of the treaty rights of the Chippewa.

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22 Northeast Indian Quarterly Spring 1991

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radical overhaul of the elected system constituted under the Canadian Indian Act (Mohawk Council of Kahnawake), and those who would retain the status quo. The second group, Mohawks favoring a traditional Iroquois (Haudenosaunee, or "Longhouse") system of government for Kahnawake, are divided between supporters of the conservative Six Nations Confederacy traditional Chiefs, and the breakaway militants of Kahnawake's largest Longhouse.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to the inevitable conflicts arising from the division of the community into competing ideological groups, for several years the Warrior Longhouse faction had been identified with illegal activities by non-Indian police and had been known within the community to use violence against fellow Mohawks. Many Mohawks saw the Warrior Longhouse militants as a "Mohawk Mafia" of sorts, protecting financial interests in the cigarette smuggling operations based in Kahnawake.<sup>6</sup> Yet throughout the confrontation, the militants justified their actions in terms of ideology, claiming to defend "Mohawk Nation" sovereignty by protecting Kahnawake from "invasion" by foreign (Canadian and Quebec) governments. While bickering over protest strategies and resistance tactics is not uncommon in a crisis situation, the militants' justification suggests much deeper roots to Kahnawake's internal divisions.

This article examines the dynamics of Kahnawake's internal conflict during the 1990 crisis, focusing on the ideological differences between the Warrior Longhouse faction and the relatively moderate views of the majority of Kahnawake residents. It contends that the Warrior Longhouse faction manipulated Kahnawake's general support for Mohawk land rights issues and transformed a general sympathy for Kanesatake into an active complicity in the protection of Warrior Longhouse financial interests and ideology. To show this, it will be necessary to consolidate the evidence into three categories: 1) that which illustrates the divergence of interests and ideology between the Warrior Longhouse and the majority of Kahnawake Mohawks; 2) evidence of how the Warrior leadership abandoned the majority of Mohawks during the negotiation phase of the conflict, when the Canadian and Quebec governments recognized it as the representative of the entire Mohawk Nation; and, 3) reactions from individuals and groups opposed to the Warrior Longhouse during and after the period when the Mohawk community as a whole supported the maintenance of barricades around Mohawk territory.

#### IDENTITY AND POLITICS

*Political cleavages in Kahnawake are rooted in the tensions and ambiguities of Mohawk identity in contemporary society. There is no agreement on the issues which should form the basis for a consensus on political*

24 Northeast Indian Quarterly Spring 1991

## Commentary

# From Bad to Worse Internal Politics in the 1990 Crisis at Kahnawake

Gerald R. Alfred

During the summer of 1990, the Mohawk community of Kahnawake, located just south of Montreal, Canada, was the center of a long and violent conflict that pitted Mohawks against the provincial government of Quebec, federal authorities, and the surrounding non-Indian society.<sup>1</sup> Most importantly however, the Mohawk Crisis pitted Mohawks against each other. It appears as a page from the history of European colonialism in North America. The Crisis was sparked as the provincial government supported the attempt by a non-Indian municipality to expand a golf course into Mohawk burial grounds and pine forests in Kanesatake, another Mohawk community thirty miles north of Montreal. Mohawk claims to ownership of the land and the presence of Mohawk burial grounds did little to dissuade the non-Indians from attempting to take possession of the disputed territory. For the non-Indian community, the value of land in terms of the increased revenue and status it would bring—nine more holes for the golf course—outweighed the Mohawks' legal rights and concerns for the land's historical and cultural significance.

In protest, Mohawk women prevented passage of construction machinery and the Mohawks' elected government requested federal government intervention on their behalf. The federal government dragged its feet while the Quebec province overruled the initiative and ordered the Mohawk barricades dismantled and the protesters dispersed. On July 17th, Indians and non-Indians alike recoiled in horror as Quebec's paramilitary tactical unit assaulted the nonviolent Mohawk protest using automatic machine guns, concussion grenades and tear gas. The assault left one Quebec policeman dead, apparently shot accidentally by fellow officers. It also generated an internal conflict over the appropriate response to the assault within the Mohawk communities of Kanesatake and Kahnawake. As the confrontation simmered in Kanesatake, Mohawks at Kahnawake acted

immediately in support of their relatives and friends. The focus shifted to the more populated area around Montreal as a result of the subsequent erection of sympathy blockades by a faction of Kahnawake Mohawks just south of Montreal. Militant Mohawks took up arms and had considerable success in convincing many Kahnawake residents that armed confrontation was the only appropriate response to the assault by Quebec security forces on Kanesatake.

Yet even as the community of Kahnawake galvanized in its support of the Kanesatake Mohawks, it was deeply divided on ideology, strategy, and tactics. During the three months of the conflict, Kahnawake exhibited a dual purpose for only the first month—the period following the initial shock at the action of the militants and the subsequent indiscriminate counter attack on Mohawks in general by the surrounding non-Indian communities.<sup>2</sup> There was an initial consensus on the value of some sort of protest action in support of Kanesatake, but the problem of managing and maintaining that consensus proved too difficult for the militants' leadership. Once the community had lived through the difficulties of a complete blockade imposed by outside police forces and recognized the inexperienced leadership of the militants, the majority of Kahnawake Mohawks began to question the value of maintaining an adamant isolationist and confrontationalist position.

Critical to the emergence of discord within the Mohawk community was the fact that the sympathy blockade and armed resistance was initiated by the Mohawk Warrior Society and the allied "Warrior Longhouse" faction without the consent of the majority of Kahnawake residents. Given its bearing on the events surrounding the Crisis, the factional situation in Kahnawake warrants some further explanation. Within the community, there are essentially two main groups, which can be subdivided into four factions. These favoring a modern elected system of government and administration are divided between people seeking a

22 Northeast Indian Quarterly Spring 1991 23

policy formulation. What does exist among the Kahnawake Mohawks is a vague though persistent sense of Iroquoian historical tradition and a keen awareness of the difference between being a "Mohawk" as opposed to being a non-Indian. This lack of consensus has not been addressed in a significant way by any of the factions competing for legitimacy and authority in Kahnawake. Neither has an attempt been made by the community's leaders to recognize differences or to create a reconstituted Mohawk identity encompassing all of the different factions. Instead, the different factions appear to have withdrawn into hostile political camps.

The absence of an overarching Mohawk identity maintains a vacuum in which all of the factions' ideas on identity and ideology compete for legitimacy. While it is beyond the scope of this article to fully address the issue of Mohawk identity, the Mohawk Crisis of 1990 does provide an example of how the lack of consensus on identity affects policy and politics in Kahnawake. Instead of a unified community response to the external threat posed by Canadian and Quebec aggression, Kahnawake's response ensued out of a skirmish yielding one faction a small political victory over the other factions. *The danger of factionalism is that while political groups may predominate temporarily on particular issues, the community as a whole is denied representation both in the short term and long term.* Never is the community properly and completely represented by those claiming to speak for it, and the cycle of internal conflict is perpetuated as other factions seek to unseat those posing as leaders.

Efforts by Warrior Longhouse supporters to downplay the reality of Kahnawake politics by creating the illusion of unity in fact strengthens the above analysis. A unified Mohawk front, it was felt, would counter attempts by federal and provincial governments to psychologically split the community as a pretext to invading Mohawk territory. Further, it would serve the additional function of strengthening the bargaining position of Mohawk negotiators vis-à-vis Canada and Quebec.<sup>3</sup> An elected chief supportive of the Warriors during the conflict stated: "The Mohawks of Kanesatake and Kahnawake stand together shoulder to shoulder; we are all warriors, every man, woman and child."<sup>4</sup> This statement was delivered at the height of the conflict when the media observed a real fault in the unity fiction created by Warrior supporters. The chief's use of the word "Warrior" was confusing. The term "Warrior" (the closest approximation of which in the Mohawk language simply denotes all young people of the Mohawk Nation) suggested that all Mohawks supported the Warrior Society. In reality, "unity" was nothing more than a buzzword effectively employed by Mohawk politicians to confuse the outside authorities. In fact, only three days before, an incident occurred in

which the elected Chief of the Kanesatake Mohawks and his outspoken supporters had been beaten and shot at by Warriors.<sup>5</sup> This attack on Chief George Martin challenged the validity of the Warriors' claim of Mohawk solidarity.

#### PRIOR INTERNAL CONFLICT

One of the reasons some Kahnawake Mohawks found it hard to disregard factional disputes, and accept the Warrior Longhouse's claim of sincerity, was the nature and intensity of recent internal conflicts throughout the Mohawk Nation. Factional confrontations in the spring of 1990 at Akwesasne, a third Mohawk community near Cornwall, Ontario, where two Mohawks were killed as a result of Warrior-initiated violence, had reminded Kahnawake Mohawks that deep ideological and personal cleavages existed between Mohawk militants and the majority of community residents. There are striking parallels of factional violence reflected in all of the Mohawk territories where Warrior activities and the neo-traditionalist Longhouse ideology are present. The many individual communities comprising the Mohawk Nation are subject to a spillover effect where political problems are concerned due to the similar institutional arrangements governing the territories and close social and familial ties between the Mohawk communities.

Mohawks who favored the elected system feared the Warrior Longhouse's radical ideology, which at times has called for the execution of "traitors" to the Mohawk Nation and the imposition of a xenophobic quasi-traditionalist regime on the community. Supporters of the Six Nations Confederacy system considered the Warrior Longhouse ideology a bastardized corruption of traditional Iroquois teachings.<sup>6</sup> For example, as early as April of 1988, prominent Mohawks warned of the danger inherent in the elected government's acquiescence to the Warrior Longhouse program to build an economic base by exploiting the Mohawks' collective right to free passage over the Canada-United States border:

The Council [MCK] is making a terrible mistake in allowing itself to be used and manipulated by consulting only with this group and then going to the public to try and convince us that we should abide by the decisions made by a handful of misguided money-blinded individuals who call themselves traditionalists.<sup>7</sup>

Even Mohawks allied with the Warriors in the illegal cigarette trade since 1985 soon recognized the realities of dealing with a "Mohawk Mafia." In March of 1988, a group of store operators requested help from the MCK to resist Warrior Longhouse attempts to gain control over the cigarette trade.<sup>8</sup> Help was not forthcoming, and the Warrior Longhouse succeeded in creating a virtual monopoly over the entire cigarette trade in Kahnawake. The revenue derived from this monopoly

22 Northeast Indian Quarterly Spring 1991 25

was used to fund its overt political challenges to the elected Council.

Internal ideological conflict inhibits the attainment of a consensus among Kahnawake Mohawks on any issue involving the leadership of the Warrior Longhouse. This is exemplified in the MCK's harshly critical attitude towards the Warriors prior to the conflict. Although the Council publicly supported the Warriors' actions during the crisis, in the days leading up to the erection of barricades by the Warriors, they had been chastising Warrior Longhouse leaders for incompetence and for verbal assaults recently leveled at MCK Chiefs.

Clearly, the actions of the Warrior Longhouse in response to the events at Kanestake represent a unilateral decision. The majority of the community, including the elected leadership, had no say whatsoever in the erection of barricades or initiation of confrontation with Quebec authorities at Kahnawake. Yet, faced with the fait accompli of barricades and armed Mohawks face-to-face with non-Indian police forces, all Mohawks were compelled to accept the Warrior Longhouse's actions and move forward. This "crisis solidarity," while temporary, rests on the commonality in all self-conceptions of Mohawk identity: the keen awareness of the difference between Mohawks and non-Indians, and a shared sensitivity towards territorial issues arising out of the common historical experience with non-Indian governments and their consistent effort to eliminate the Mohawk land base. When faced with a situation rooted in a land conflict in which the non-Indian community refused to see the difference between a "Mohawk Warrior" and a "Mohawk," internal discord dissipated.

**DEFEAT FROM THE JAWS OF VICTORY: THE NEGOTIATIONS**  
As the conflict degenerated into a political stalemate and armed standoff at the barricades, the provincial government sought to negotiate it to an end. But instead of initiating discussions with the elected bodies representing the majority of Mohawks, the government of Quebec focused on direct talks with the militants who had erected barricades around Kahnawake. This was quite a coup for the Warrior Longhouse, who had previously been shunned by both the federal and provincial authorities. Thus the MCK was paralyzed by its position between Mohawk militants and the outside authorities. Quebec's move had conferred a degree of legitimacy on the Warriors, and it was at this point that a window of opportunity opened for the militants, as well as for the community as a whole. If the Warrior Longhouse could gain a reasonable settlement to the dispute, it would be seen as offering the leadership which had taken bold action to bring a non-Indian government to its knees. On the other hand, factions within the community had an opportunity to put aside their differences in the face of adversity and to begin a reconciliation process by

constructing a united Mohawk negotiating team, that would represent the entire community and share in the outcome of the negotiations, whether it be the burden of failure or the pride of success.

The Warrior Longhouse failed to capitalize on this opportunity. Instead, it isolated the majority of community members by appointing a negotiating team composed entirely of its most radical adherents, who lacked basic political and negotiating skills.<sup>13</sup> There was a lengthy delay while Quebec and Canadian authorities undertook to fulfill the Warrior Longhouse's "preconditions" to negotiation. Three seemingly reasonable preconditions were publicized by the Warrior Longhouse as: 1) free access and regular flow of supplies to the Mohawks; 2) free access of advisors and attorneys; and, 3) elimination of harassment and intimidation of people entering Kahnawake and Kanestake.<sup>14</sup> However, throughout the crisis, the Warrior Longhouse had been imposing a wider set of "preconditions" that reflected a desire to integrate its own economic and political interests into a settlement. Despite adamant denials by Warrior Longhouse personnel within the community, their actions at the bargaining table indicate that the faction viewed the entire situation as a chance to gain predominance in Kahnawake.

Despite claims to represent the entire Mohawk Nation, the Warrior Longhouse's negotiating position reflected an extreme bias towards its own particular ideology to the neglect of the interests of Mohawks as a whole. In addition to demands dealing with the settlement of the blockades and the land issue in Kanestake, which constituted legitimate Mohawk interests at this point, conditions calculated to protect the Warrior Longhouse's economic enterprises were put forward. Of the six points listed in its negotiation text, the fifth illustrates the Warrior Longhouse's real aims: the fifth illustrates the Warrior Longhouse's real aims:

All other issues regarding the present events at Kanestake and Kahnawake, both civil and potentially criminal, as well as all disputes relating to [Mohawk] sovereignty and land rights shall be referred to the World Court at the Hague with all parties hereto to be bound by that court's determinations... [In emphasis]

Sovereignty per se was not an issue in the decision to erect blockades.<sup>15</sup> There is no consensus within Kahnawake, much less the Mohawk Nation, concerning sovereignty; it is a debate that rages daily as there exists a multiplicity of interpretations on the status of the Mohawk Nation's legal and political autonomy relative to the North American states. Most Kahnawake Mohawks do agree that they collectively partake of a distinct political relationship with the Canadian government based upon the concept of aboriginal rights that supersede European imposed legal regimes. For their part, the Warrior Longhouse asserts an ideological

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position and rationalization of sovereignty reflective of the conservative traditionalist Iroquois, albeit with vastly divergent goals. For most other Mohawks though, the issue is far from resolved and remains extremely divisive. The central point of contention within the communities concerns the ongoing struggle to define the terms of internal debate concerning sovereignty issues, and to determine the future course of negotiations with non-Indian governments.

Thus, inserting the phrase "all disputes relating to [Mohawk] sovereignty and land disputes" into the discussion as a formal condition constituted an attempt to base the removal of blockades upon an acceptance of the Warrior Longhouse's ideas on the nature and practical implications of "sovereignty" for the Mohawks. Their reasons for doing so become obvious when, in a telephone interview with a Canadian Press reporter during the blockade, a Warrior spokesman admitted that this clause would be interpreted to mean protection of the Warrior Longhouse's controversial "Super Bingo" project—which was considered illegal by the Quebec government and had been constructed despite a rejection of the plan by community referendum in Kahnawake because it was considered by the majority of Mohawks to jeopardize their political relationship with federal authorities and abusive of the Mohawks' special status within the Canadian legal system.<sup>17</sup>

Perhaps the best evidence of the Warrior Longhouse's intentions is contained in a formal public response to community demands for information concerning the negotiations. On August 12th, the Mohawk Council and the Warrior Longhouse administrative office (Mohawk Nation Office) were simultaneously presented a set of questions from a community meeting the night before. It was decided by both the Mohawk Nation Office and the elected chiefs that the public would be presented with a show of unity and that the questions would be answered in the form of a joint statement by both the MCK and the Warrior Longhouse. A comparison of the original MCK draft and the final draft responses produced under the

"guidance" of Mohawk Nation Office representatives illustrates how the Mohawk public was manipulated:<sup>18</sup>

**Question:** Who in fact selected the Negotiation Committee? And, who gave them the mandate to speak on our behalf?

**MCK Draft:** It has always been the belief of the Mohawk Nation Office and their Longhouse that they speak for the entire Mohawk Nation at Kahnawake. It is the position of the Mohawk Council that the representatives sent by the Mohawk Nation Office took it upon themselves to speak for Kahnawake as a whole.

**Joint Draft:** The fact is that, given their long personal involvement, it was people from the Longhouse who were asked by the people [in Kanestake] to help. The Mohawk Council was not asked nor consulted by anyone involved. Joe Norton later requested that the MCK be given representation on the negotiating team. His request was not acted upon at that time but has since been granted.

The Warrior Longhouse's response that the MCK was given representation on the team at Grand Chief Norton's request was technically correct, but the implication that non-Warrior supporters' interests were represented at the table was definitely misleading. The participation of persons other than Warrior Longhouse supporters on the negotiating committee was little more than a facade. According to the list of Mohawk delegates to the negotiations dated August 20th, the fifty-one member "Mohawk Negotiating Delegation" was subdivided into the "Negotiating Team," "Advisors," and "Spiritual Advisors." At the actual bargaining table, only those on the "Negotiating Team" were permitted to speak and all decisions were made amongst the four leaders of that team. The "Negotiating Team" was made up entirely of Warrior Longhouse supporters while the "Advisors" included only seven non-Warrior representatives who were relegated to observer status.<sup>19</sup>

The extent to which the Kahnawake Warrior Longhouse dominated the negotiations is illustrated by the Kanestake Mohawks' complaints that their land dispute had taken a back seat to the Warrior

—Northeast Indian Quarterly Spring 1991 27

26 Northeast Indian Quarterly Spring 1991

Longhouse's interests. In a nationwide communique, the Kanestake Mohawk Negotiating Team summarized the majority of Mohawks' frustration with the situation:

Since July 14th, the Mohawk People of Kanestake have attempted to cooperate with the negotiation process organized by the "Mohawk Nation (Warriors)" negotiators, but have become increasingly concerned that they were not being given a significant role; were not permitted to involve their own advisors; and that the issues of direct concern to the community in the areas of land and jurisdiction were not being addressed... The majority of our community is not affiliated with the Longhouse or the Warrior Society. We have made repeated attempts to cooperate with the [Warriors'] negotiators to ensure that the voice of the majority of Mohawk people is clearly heard and understood, only to be rebuffed, insulted, and abused. This refusal by the [Warriors'] negotiators to accept this clearly defined priorities of the Mohawk People of Kanestake does not respect the inherent authority, rights or aspirations of our people. This situation is intolerable.<sup>20</sup>

The Warrior Longhouse was likewise evasive when it came to a queries regarding accountability:

**Question:** Who, in fact, gave the ultimate order for the Warriors to [erect the barricades]?

**MCK Draft:** The Longhouse stated... that this action had been planned beforehand as a possible response to any problems at Kanestake. As for the ultimate order to block the highways, members of Council were told by... that the "women of the Longhouse" ordered the blockades set up and that only they would decide when they would be opened.

**Joint Draft:**...the rationale for this action is in direct relation to the duties of the men in the Longhouse to protect the people and the lands of the Mohawk Nation. As for the ultimate order to block the highways, members of the MCK were told by two acting clan mothers... that "the women of the Longhouse" ordered the blockades set up and that "only they would decide when they would be lifted." The action was taken in line with the responsibilities of the men under Iroquois law.<sup>21</sup>

Two goals were achieved with this response: 1) Warrior individuals were shielded from accountability for their actions—the public was denied knowledge of the persons within the Warrior Longhouse directly responsible for ordering the barricades; and, 2) the Warrior Longhouse rationalization for their attempt to achieve political hegemony was justified in the language of Iroquois traditionalism. With the active cooperation of some elected chiefs, the Warrior Longhouse succeeded in isolating from the entire process all but a small group of their faction. Having created a political stalemate and armed standoff, the Warrior Longhouse for a time succeeded in monopolizing the articulation of Mohawk demands.

26 Northeast Indian Quarterly Spring 1991

The tactic of excluding most of the community from the negotiating process and manipulating the public with misinformation, combined with political myopia and a lack of negotiating experience ultimately led to the failure of the Warrior Longhouse in negotiations. The moderate demands of most Mohawks concerning land rights and jurisdiction within Mohawk territory were not articulated and were instead replaced with unreasonable and unrepresentative Warrior demands. Some Mohawks began to challenge the monopoly of the Warrior Longhouse and chastise the Canadians, as well as their own elected representatives, for allowing Warriors to speak on behalf of the Mohawk Nation.<sup>22</sup>

The Canadian government responded to these developments, as well as to increasing pressure from its own constituents to remove the barricades, by breaking off negotiations and ordering a military solution to the conflict. In the aftermath of the Warrior Longhouse's miscalculation, Kahnawake was subjected to a humiliating occupation by the Canadian Army, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and the Quebec provincial Police force. It became obvious to most Kahnawake Mohawks that the Warrior Longhouse leadership had managed to create a defeat out of what seemed a golden opportunity to advance some of the Mohawks' interests vis-à-vis the Canadian and Quebec authorities. As they had been the faction that initiated the entire conflict in Kahnawake and monopolized the negotiation process, the Warrior Longhouse faction and its supporters in Council are seen increasingly as the primary cause of Kahnawake's current predicament.

**A HOUSE DEEPLY DIVIDED: THE AFTERMATH OF FAILURE**

The community's factional cleavages were deepened as a result of the crisis and particularly the Warrior Longhouse's conduct during the negotiation phase. Towards the end of the summer, many Mohawks sought to distance themselves from the Warriors politically, regardless of the effect on the projection of unity. The elected Mohawk Council, as a political force, was invisible through the main junctures of the Crisis. As a result, the MCK was criticized by Mohawks who saw the events of the summer as a threat to the rights and freedoms which the MCK as an institution was supposed to protect. Community opinion began to solidify behind forcing the elected Council to challenge the Warriors' dominance of the situation and decisively end the standoff.

On August 23rd, a group representing most of Kahnawake's women distributed an open letter to the community challenging the Warrior Longhouse's dominance and the MCK's lack of action:

Many people in Kahnawake, Kanestake & Akwesasne believe that the present blockade crisis is out of hand and is, indeed, in the wrong hands... We realize that the Council may feel insecure about its mandate... However,

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they should not assume that the majority of the community has accepted the warriors/nation office as leaders/spokespeople for the Confederacy. What is indicated is people's disgust as the Mohawk Council of Kahnawake continues to abdicate responsibility & (sic) authority to a self-interested, small but aggressive faction in Mohawk communities. It is time to question whether [we] have been manipulated into a situation of supporting this warriors/nation office who, we should remember, are the same people who defied community will, ignoring consensus on numerous occasions... They used the Kanestake land issues as a catalyst to get community support, to clean their faces after their terrorist involvement at Akwesasne just three months prior...<sup>22</sup>

Within the Council itself, there was division over the appropriate course of action in response to the heightened state of dissension. As stated previously, some members of the Council actively supported the Warrior Longhouse. Others were torn over the anticipated repercussions of acknowledging internal division and openly denouncing the Warriors. It was feared that this admission would provide a pretext for the Canadian forces to enter the territory and "rescue" the Council, a move which would, it was thought, brand Council members as traitors to their people.<sup>23</sup>

The MCK's concerns were certainly valid given the conduct of Canadian authorities in the past,<sup>24</sup> and the degree to which the Warrior Longhouse had succeeded in turning the Mohawk public against the elected Council. The statement quoted above shows how most Mohawks had supported the Warrior Longhouse's actions out of sense of loyalty to the Kanestake Mohawks and their land conflict. Yet some analysts warned the Council of the dangers of supporting the Warrior Longhouse after they had demonstrated undemocratic tactics and political incompetence during the negotiation phase.<sup>25</sup>

Despite the admissions, the MCK failed to counteract the Warriors' influence, and, as a consequence, their control over Kahnawake continued until external factors intervened. The Warrior

Longhouse's pretense of legitimacy finally collapsed as the Canadian government expelled the Warriors' bluff and advanced on their positions with orders to remove the barricades. Having vowed to die in defense of Mohawk territory, the Warriors nonetheless fled Kahnawake at the Army's advance, leaving other Mohawks to face down the Canadian Forces and negotiate the physical dismantling of the barricades surrounding the territory. The Canadian Army moved to secure Kahnawake and root out the most adamant of the remaining Warriors, resulting in a number of violent clashes between the Army and militant Mohawks.

Following the Crisis, the elected Council and the moderate Mohawks it represents have been forced to accept the legacy of a three-month Warrior Longhouse government: strained social and political relations with the non-Indian communities bordering Kahnawake; a real loss of Mohawk jurisdictional authority as a result of the continuing federal and provincial police presence on the territory; and most importantly, deepened factional cleavages and an open crisis of internal governmental legitimacy. Kahnawake as a community was nearly destroyed by its own inability to defuse the extremism of the Warriors. As a result, all Mohawks have been stereotypically cast in the Warriors' ugly image to the outside world as being violent and unreasonable.

Critical appraisals of the situation by non-Indians thus far has been limited to editorial commentary or pseudo-intellectual patronizing of the militants by journalists covering the conflict. Many non-Indians became enamored of the Warriors' posing as modern day "noble savages." That image has inspired laudatory praise from sympathetic writers in essays such as Marlene Basendale's *This Land is Our Land*.<sup>26</sup> Aside from the naive such observers demonstrate in their casual and unchallenging acceptance of the Warrior ideology, they also betray a total misapprehension of the internal politics of Mohawk communities. It does seem that in a state of chaos,

—Northeast Indian Quarterly Spring 1991 29

regardless of intelligence or intent, whoever makes the most noise will be listened to. But far from being benign, these commentaries work against the reconstitution of stability and effective government in Mohawk territories. They in fact contribute to the public misconception of Mohawks as "Warriors", and to the perpetuation of a clearly ineffective and conflicting Warrior ideology.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Has anything positive come out of the Crisis from the perspective of Kahnawake's Mohawks? One conclusion is that the ordeal has served as a catalyst for the community to focus on the problems of political fractionalization. Having the reality of the Warrior Longhouse's program thrown in their face has jarred some Mohawks into action against further implementation of that ideology. One group of approximately 200 Mohawks, Ka'nikonhriio ("Good Minds"), has come together and managed to integrate Mohawks from all of the other factions in opposition to the Warrior Longhouse. Their stated objective is to "assist in restoring the peace, harmony and stability in Kahnawake." The group is concentrating on democratizing the decision-making process in Kahnawake and ensuring that the community receives information concerning the political alignment of the elected Council.<sup>17</sup>

If the community is to permanently resolve the issue of fractionalization, it must look beyond the manifestations of the problems to its source. Mohawks must face the deeper question of the loss of a consensus on Mohawk identity, especially as it relates to the meaning and practical implications of sovereignty in the modern political context. Factionalism occurs in the absence of a solid base for the creation of legitimacy in Kahnawake's political arena. This ideological vacuum encourages open competition for legitimacy and, consequently, Kahnawake's entire political process is characterized by inconsistent decision-making and incoherent leadership. Politics is thus a vacuum in which economic resources, force, and propaganda determine authority rather than institutions, rules, or democratic processes. The consistent assertion of Mohawk values, however defined, is thus neglected as the political space vacated by the lack of a shared conception of legitimacy is manipulated by those seeking to advance their own self-interest.

In varying degrees, all Mohawks are guilty of manipulating this lack of consensus to their benefit: individuals avoid making value judgements and fail to take a stand against injustices because there are no common, definable standards by which to measure the perpetrators' adherence to Mohawk values; the Mohawk Council remains largely tied to a non-Mohawk system of rules, and delays action on its mandate to

turn "traditional" because it has no clear idea what being "traditional" means. The actions of the Warrior Longhouse in the summer conflict are only one more example of a self-interested group in the community using the political vacuum to its advantage, although the result was made much more divisive by the extreme tactics chosen by the Warriors to advance their fundamentally ingallitarian program.

No consistent effort is being made by any group to address the problem of Mohawk identity. Clearly, the reconciliation process must focus on the education of Mohawks to a realistic conception of sovereignty. In addition, a new governing institution competent to redefine Mohawk identity must be created; this new government must then institute a system of representation capable of integrating diverse interpretations of the newly-reconstituted conception of Mohawk identity and sovereignty. The Mohawks have gone from a political situation where they had managed to prosper and advance their interests in spite of a lack of consensus on identity, to one in which they are threatened with occupation and complete political subjugation. The Crisis of 1990 in effect raised the political stakes for the Mohawk people; if they fail to respond with an appropriate reconciliation process, things will no doubt go from bad to worse...again.

#### Notes

1. Portions of the introduction also appear in an unpublished paper by the author entitled, "Putting the House on Order: A Research Exchange Strategy for Establishing Effective Government in Kahnawake"; and "The Mohawk Crisis and Native Sovereignty in Canada," *Cornell Political Forum* Vol. V, No. 2 (December 1990). The author acknowledges the contribution of his colleague Mr. Kenneth Bush in suggesting revisions to earlier drafts of these and other works.
2. The federal government was apprehensive because of its recent defeat in an effort to gain a constitutional amendment to the Canadian Constitution which would have provided a special status within the federal system for the Province of Quebec.
3. All of the undocumented examples and events used in this essay are drawn from the author's personal experience and observation. Further substantiation may be found in Canadian news magazines such as *Maclean's* which reported on the entire conflict at both Mohawk territories around Montreal. Also, the *Montreal Gazette* provided daily coverage of events throughout the summer of 1990.
4. For detailed information on the Warrior Society and its role in contemporary Mohawk society see: *Akwesasne Notes*, Vol. 22 No. 4 (Early Fall, 1990).
5. For lack of specific labels delineating the militant Kahnawake Longhouse and Six Nations Confederacy factions, I refer to the Kahnawake Longhouse as the "Warrior Longhouse." Its creation and public support of the Warrior Society in Kahnawake justifies the connection.
6. As a result of the Jay Treaty of 1793 between Great Britain and the United States, Mohawks possess certain rights in the context of both Canadian and American law concerning free

passage on the border between those two countries. Despite the clarity contained in the wording of the original treaty reaffirming the right of Indians to pass freely with personal goods, there is some ambiguity in interpreting what exactly constitutes "personal goods." The United States takes a more liberal stance than does Canada. Some Mohawks have exploited this ambiguity and profited from "diverting" untaxed Canadian cigarettes bound for the American market back into Canada for sale in Kahnawake at cut rates, where they were immune from taxation under Canadian law.

7. Chief Billy Two-Rivers, conversation with author, Dec. 23, 1990.
8. *Maclean's*, Aug. 6, 1990: 20.
9. *La Presse* (Montreal), Aug. 3, 1990: 1.
10. *Akwesasne Notes*: 4-5.
11. Myrtle Bush, in *Consideration of Bingo, Cigarettes, Warriors and Council Responsibility* (Kahnawake: Author, 1988).
12. Kahnawake Cigarette Merchants Association, Kahnawake, to Mohawk Council of Kahnawake, Kahnawake, 31 March 1988. MCK Files.
13. This is an observation by the author as a result of his attendance at the initial round of tripartite negotiations in Montreal in late August 1990. It must be noted that while the Warrior Longhouse negotiators were generally unqualified to capitalize on the opportunity to address substantive issues of divergence between the Mohawk people and the Canadian government, the Warrior Longhouse's drive for factional supremacy within Kahnawake was aided by the advice of Stanley Cohen, a New York City lawyer.
14. Konwawerohawee Deer, Kahnawake, to John Ciaccia, Quebec, July 28, 1990. MCK Files.
15. Mohawk Nation Office, *From the People of Kanesatake*, July 18, 1990, 2:00 pm (Kahnawake: Mohawk Nation Office).
16. An explanation and justification for erecting blockades was offered to the community by the Warriors at a meeting of the Longhouse two days into the Crisis. Warrior Longhouse leaders stressed the fact that the barricade tactic was part of a pre-planned strategy to show support for the Warrior Longhouse people protesting at Kanesatake.
17. Eric Siblin, *Canadian Press Wire*, Montreal, Aug. 21, 1990.
18. The author was responsible for drafting the MCK's original responses in consultation with the elected Chiefs. He also witnessed the influence of Warrior Longhouse representatives upon the substance of the final responses to the public. See: *MCK Response to Questions From Public Meeting*, Aug. 13, 1990. MCK Files; and *Mohawk Council of Kahnawake - Mohawk Nation Office: Joint Statement*, Aug. 13, 1990. MCK Files.
19. The author was listed as an "Advisor" to the Mohawk Negotiating Delegation and attended the first two negotiation sessions. See: Mohawk Nation Office, *Mohawk Negotiating Delegation*, Aug. 20, 1990. MCK Files.
20. Kanesatake Mohawk Negotiating Team, *Communiqué to the First Nations of Canada*, Aug. 21, 1990. MCK Files.
21. At this point the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, in its national news programs, began to include commentary and interviews with Mohawks opposed to Warriors from a variety of Mohawk communities. As well, Montreal area news media focused on "dissenters" within the community, citing numerous Mohawks who refused to be identified for fear of retaliation by the Warriors. For illustrations of the growing dissatisfaction, and vocal expressions of frustration within the Mohawk community, see the *Montreal Gazette's* coverage for

August 30th through September.

22. Ionkwawirihwaads (Women of Kahnawake), *TO ALL KAHNENKESHIAKA IN ALL MOHAWK TERRITORIES*, Aug. 23, 1990 (Kahnawake: MCK Files).
23. The author was present at Council meetings throughout the Crisis. Normally, as a matter of procedure, minutes are kept of all discussions, but due to the extenuation circumstances and irregular meetings during the Crisis, no record was kept.
24. The Canadian government has historically sought to undermine the stability and political integrity of Indian communities. From the original 1876 *Indian Act* to the 1969 *White Paper*, Canadian authorities have employed a variety of legislative maneuvers geared toward eliminating Indian nations as distinct polities in this context, see: J. Rick Poirting, *Arduous Journey: Canadian Indians and Decolonization* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986) 35-56.
25. Many Mohawks expressed their feelings in a letter to members of the elected Council. The author, as a person identified with the MCK during the Crisis, was on the receiving end of many expressions of dissatisfaction and apprehension from community members. Most of the substance of their expressions are capitalized in this statement contained in a letter to the MCK leadership. Author, Ithaca, NY, to John Morris (Executive Director, MCK), Kahnawake, Aug. 24, 1990. MCK Files.
26. You and I both know that this entire crisis has less to do with unity and brotherhood than power-grabbing and greed... The majority of [Mohawks] were not consulted as to the blockade's establishment, the selection of negotiators or the term of settlement to be discussed; this is not democracy in either the Western or Inqoqsoan sense. People are discouraged or actively prevented from speaking their mind for fear of being labelled a "traitor"...; this is not freedom. The press is being manipulated and denied access to our community because our leadership fears that cracks in our solidarity will begin to show; this is not justice. The Warriors... have monopolized decision-making... in this community... without so much as token resistance from the elected leadership. In fact, we have legitimized their office by allowing their leadership to dictate policy to the elected Chiefs. This was a serious mistake... I see a community whose leaders have either acquiesced or participated in the demolition of democracy, freedom and justice in the interests of those who... possess superior firepower and financial resources.
26. Craig MacLaine and Michael Basendale, *This Land is Our Land: The Mohawk Revolt at Oka* (Montreal: Oxytemum, 1990).
27. Ka'nikonhriio: "Good Minds," *Newsletter*, Edition #1 (Kahnawake: Ka'nikonhriio, 1990).