

Vern Neufeld Redekop

From Violence to Blessing

**How an Understanding
of Deep-Rooted Conflict
Can Open Paths
to Reconciliation**

Foreword by Archbishop Desmond Tutu
Winner of the Nobel Peace Prize



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Chapter 10

The Oka/Kanehsatà:ke Crisis of 1990

On July 11, 1990, the Sûreté du Québec (SQ) raided the Pines, a disputed territory claimed by both the Mohawk community of *Kanehsatà:ke*¹ and the Municipality of Oka. In 1989 developers, with the support of the Oka Municipal Council, began planning to cut down the pine trees so they could expand a nine-hole golf course to eighteen holes, build homes around the perimeter, and remove the existing cemetery to expand their parking lot. As it became clear that protests would not deter developers, Mohawks occupied the Pines in March 1990 and remained there into July, ignoring court orders to leave.

In the July 11 attack, Corporal Marcel Lemay of the SQ was shot to death. That day Mohawks blockaded the Mercier Bridge, which runs through the Mohawk reserve of *Kahnawà:ke*, causing great inconvenience to commuters from the South Shore of the St. Lawrence River who worked in Montreal. Passions were ignited to the point of mob action against the Mohawks and Mohawk Warriors prepared to fight to the death to defend their land rights. The standoff in *Kanehsatà:ke* and *Kahnawà:ke* lasted for 78 days and the Canadian military was eventually involved. Mohawks were convinced that there would be significant loss of life in the process.

Present-day Mohawks living near the Lake of Two Mountains think of themselves as *Kanehsata'keró:non* (people who belong to the land of *Kanehsatà:ke*). This sense of belonging to a particular piece of land is part of their spiritual tradition. Most of the Mohawks living there can trace their ancestry back to those who lived there hundreds of years ago. The people have a collective consciousness of being part of this land and those who join the people adopt that same consciousness just as those who convert to Judaism join in a collective sense of being part of the land of Israel as a spiritual place.²

We begin with the early history of Oka/*Kanehsatà:ke*. Since the dispute boiled down to who really owned the Pines, we first trace the history of the land ownership issue. The conflict was also about the aspirations of different peoples; hence, we will examine, second, the growth of ethnonationalism among the *Québécois* and Mohawks with some reference to developments at *Kahnawà:ke*, the other key venue for the crisis. Third, we will trace the evolution of the crisis from the original development of the nine-hole golf course and actions taken to expand the golf course. Fourth, we examine key events leading up to the crisis: the occupation of the Pines by the Mohawks and the failure of the Meech Lake Accord in June 1990. Fifth, we explore the beginning of the crisis on July 11, 1990. The sixth step will be an analysis of the dynamics of the crisis as it intensified and new players were

involved. The seventh step deals with passions and events of the crisis until it was diffused. Finally, we cover the end of the crisis and its aftermath. The information presented in this chapter will be the foundation for the next chapter in which the events will be interpreted using the mimetic and scapegoat theories presented earlier.

Overview of the Chapter

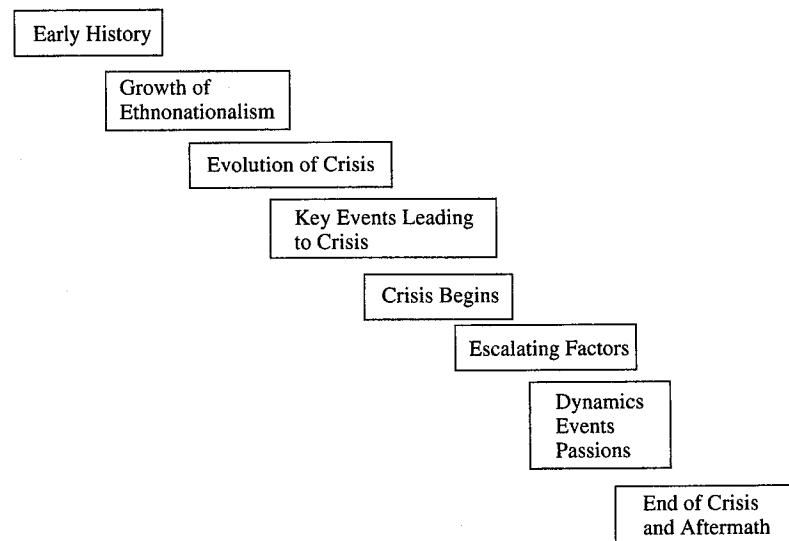


Figure 10-1

In the course of the narrative I will be using the self designations of the First Nations peoples in their own languages, explaining the meaning of the words. One specific designation, the word *Rotiskén'ráké:ta*, is generally translated as "warrior" but it refers to the men of the community; literally it means "carrier of the burden of peace."³ The Mohawk concept of peace is more than the absence of war; rather it is the "active striving of humans for the purpose of establishing universal justice" and is "the product of a society which strives to establish concepts which correlate to the English words Power, Reason and Righteousness.... The Power to enact Peace (which required that people cease abusing one another) was conceived to be both spiritual and political. But it was power in all those senses of the word—the power of persuasion and reason, the power of the inherent good will of humans, the power of a dedicated and united people, and when all else failed, the power of force."⁴

Early History

In the 1600s, the French took control of an island in the St. Lawrence River on which there was a settlement of the *Kanien'kehà:ka* (Mohawks, literally People of the Flint) called Hochelaga (now Montreal). At that time, some *Kanien'kehà:ka* moved to a Sulpician (a French religious order) mission at Sault-aux-Recollets and the old Iroquois settlement of *Kanehsatà:ke*. Most of the *Kanien'kehà:ka* population settled at *Kahnawà:ke* on the South Shore of the St. Lawrence. In 1717, the French Crown gave a tract of land (at the present site of Oka) to the Sulpicians to build a mission at the Mohawk outpost of *Kanehsatà:ke*.⁵ They were to hold the surrounding territory in trust for the Aboriginal people.

The Euro-centred history of *Kanehsatà:ke* begins with the 1721 move of a group of Christian Mohawks with Sulpician leadership from the area of Montreal to the shores of the Lake of Two Mountains. *Kanehsatà'keró:non* affirm that this is one aspect of the reality:

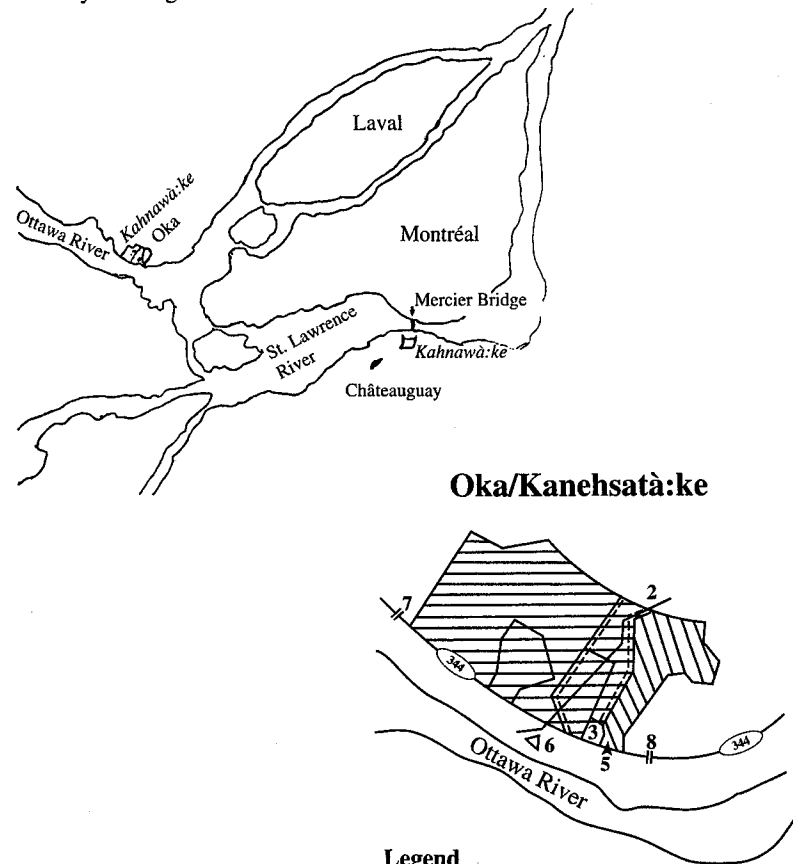
There is no doubt that in or about 1721, a group of Onkwehón:we [original people], in the company of a priest of the Seminary of St-Sulpice, moved to *Kanehsatà:ke*. There is no doubt that the Sulpicians founded a mission and that the descendants of this group of Onkwehón:we now live in *Kanehsatà:ke*.⁶

There is evidence, however, that the history of the *Kanehsatà'keró:non* goes back further.

For centuries before contact with Europeans, *Kanehsatà:ke* was a small but significant village among the *Kanien'kehà:ka*. Part of the Turtle clan, it was among the first *Kanien'kehà:ka* settlements to embrace the teachings brought by the Peacemaker;⁷ in that regard *Kanehsatà:ke* "is still mentioned in the ancient condolence ceremony of the *Rotinohseshá:ka* [Iroquois]."⁸ It was an important spot for *Kanien'kehà:ka* habitation in connection with hunting and fishing expeditions along what is now known as the Ottawa River. At one point it was a safe haven for women and children during wars with other *Onkwehón:we*.

There is evidence that there was a permanent community of *Kanien'kehà:ka* in *Kanehsatà:ke* before the 1721 arrival of Sulpicians and Mohawks from the Montreal area. There is reference to the presence of people from "Cahgneghsattakegy" at the creation of the Two Row Wampum by the *Rotinohseshá:ka* and the Dutch in 1613.⁹ Several accounts of encounters between Iroquois and the French suggest the existence of a settlement at *Kanehsatà:ke*. The name appears in New York colonial documents with several spellings of a word with the same pronunciation. The earliest reference is in a 1694 message from the governor of Canada in which *Kanehsatà:ke* was called a fort. In the late 1600s, the British referred to the "Canassadagas" as a distinct group, calling them "Praying Indians" because of the French influence.¹⁰ In correspondence written in *Kanien'kehà:ka*, people referred to their home as *Kanehsatà:ke*.¹¹ By the year 1722 more land was under cultivation than had been the case in the previous settlement at Sault-aux-Recollets, where after 20 years they had cleared 400 *arpents* (acres) of land. It is unlikely that they

could have cleared more land than that in only one year.¹² In any case, after the Sulpicians were established in the area, control of the land was transferred to this order by the king of France.



Legend

1. Original Mohawk Roadblock
 2. Kanehsatà:ke Roadblock and bunker
 3. Mohawk Cemetery
 4. Oka Golf Clubhouse
 5. Main Warrior barricade on Highway 344
 6. Onen'to:kon Treatment Centre
 7. Warrior barricade
 8. Army and Sûreté du Québec roadblocks
- ≡ "The Pines"
- \\ Oka Golf Course
- Proposed golf club expansion lands

In spite of a moratorium on seigniorial concessions in Québec between 1711 and 1732, the French Crown ratified a seigniorial concession of land at Deux Montagnes to the Seminary of St. Sulpice on April 27, 1718.¹³ The Sulpicians religious order, founded in France, was interested in missionary activity in the New World. Members of this elite order tended to be sons of judges, officers, surgeons, and small landowners.¹⁴ On September 26, 1733, and again in 1735, Louis XIV deeded more land to the concession. Eventually, the Sulpicians took complete ownership of this land, which, before their arrival, had been Mohawk territory. The Sulpician Order was to be dissolved when the last member of the original order died. However, the British government helped prolong their presumed right to the land from King Louis IV.

The question of rights to the land became ambiguous with the British conquest. In the early years of the Seven Years' War, the *Rotisken'raké:ta* (men of the community, keepers of the burden of peace) of *Kanehsatà:ke* supported the French and had held British prisoners of war. In one encounter with General Montcalm (the French general who lost the battle of the Plains of Abraham that led to British control of Canada), he dismissed the *Rotisken'raké:ta* indignantly. This angry response turned them against the French and on September 20, 1760 they returned the last remaining prisoners of war, unharmed, to the British. An exchange of wampum ratified an agreement between the British and the *Kanehsatà'kehró:non*. The people of *Kanehsatà:ke* agreed to be neutral for the rest of the war. British leader Sir William Johnson committed himself to protect the lands, rights, and freedom of the Aboriginal people in Article 49 of the French Capitulation.¹⁵ On June 28, 1761 the agreement with the British was renewed.¹⁶ Johnson later sent word to them through Daniel Clause as follows:

Brethren, as you are now become one people with us, I cheerfully [sic] Join in Strengthening and brightening the Covenant Chain of Peace and friendship, and you may depend upon it that no thing on Earth can break it, so long as you all strictly abide thereby, and as you have not the advantage of records like us, I recommend it to you, often to repeat the purport thereof & of all our mutual Engagements, to your young people so as they may never be forgotten.¹⁷

After the English won the war with France, the British attitude towards the Mohawks became arrogant and the commitment to safeguard their rights and interests declined.

Meanwhile, the Sulpicians were determined to survive in Canada even though Article 35 of Capitulation demanded that they give up their Canadian holdings and leave the country. After the Royal Proclamation of 1763, the Sulpicians swore allegiance to Britain and the land holdings were transferred from France to the Montreal seminary. There was a proviso that no new members from France would be admitted. Had it not been for the French Revolution, the order would have died a natural death by 1796. However, during the French Revolution, some French Sulpicians came to Canada and the British looked aside as they integrated into the Canadian Sulpician community.¹⁸

To establish control over the land, the Sulpicians exercised *de facto* control while at the same time reinforcing their ties to the British. This two-pronged strategy proved successful. Indicative of their practical ownership of the land, they surveyed the land in the early 1780s and settled on a border with the neighbouring seigneurie. As soon as the land was surveyed, they began to grant concessions to settlers. By 1801, 732 settlers had received lots and by 1835 the number reached 1,307¹⁹. More than six hundred families had moved onto the land by 1847,²⁰ and it had been subdivided into twelve parishes with the land in eleven already conceded.²¹ It should be noted that these settlers bought the land in good faith and passed on title through sale or inheritance to people who did not know that there might be another claim to the land. Their second strategy was to ensure that the British did not act against their claims on the land. In 1789 they swore fealty and homage to the British Crown; they interpreted the acceptance of this oath as recognition of their title to the land.

Nearly half a century later, during the 1837 rebellion, they strategically supported the British. In 1838 the British wished to go to St. Eustache to crush the rebellion. Since they could have been prey to an ambush, the Sulpicians showed Sir John Colborne a map with backwoods trails to get them to St. Eustache safely. Once there, the British set fire to the church and "mercilessly shot down the Patriots as they jumped out the windows to escape the flames."²²

The Sulpicians were rewarded in the Ordinance of 1840, which confirmed their title to the land. It was passed by a special appointed council that replaced the representative assembly after the rebellion. The Mohawks continued to live on land formally controlled by the priests. Over time, the amount of land open to them diminished as land was sold to settlers.

As the Sulpicians consolidated their control over the land, relations with the people of *Kanehsatà:ke* progressively deteriorated. Some of the Mohawks converted to Methodism and the *Kanehsata'kehró:non* were pressured to move to other lands. They were severely persecuted throughout the last half of the nineteenth century. Persecution involved not allowing them to engage in commercial activity (a canoe built and sold by a Mohawk was taken away from the new owner). They were imprisoned for cutting firewood. As many as four trials for the same event were held in an attempt to convict them; all trials ended in acquittal. There were attempts to evict them from Oka "under the pretense of building or widening streets,"²³ etc. In their own words they

have been oppressed, culturally suppressed, unjustly charged with crimes, jailed without reasons, relocated against their will, and have their children taken from them. They have been denied the necessities of life and basic human rights. They have suffered attacks on their language, culture and spirituality, and have been subjected to paternalistic assimilationist policies. The people of *Kanehsatà:ke* have never, not once, been served justice, and in spite of this have not been defeated."²⁴

By the late 1800s, much of the land on the escarpment rising from the Lac des deux Montagnes had been cleared and the sandy soil was severely eroded. In 1885, there was a major landslide in the village. The following year, on the suggestion of the Sulpicians, the Mohawks planted thousands of pine trees; these trees today are majestic and make a luscious, thick forest. The Pines is one of the oldest planted forests in Québec.²⁵

A trial over land rights began in Montreal in 1909; the government paid the legal expenses for both the *Kanehsata'kehró:non* and the Sulpicians. Lawyers for the Mohawks discovered documents in the Paris archives that confirmed "that the lands were granted to the Seminary for the sake of convenience only, and that the grants were made for the benefit of the *Kanehsata'kehró:non*."²⁶ However, Judge Hutchinson ruled for the seminary and on appeal Justice Carrol noted that

[n]either the King of France, nor the King of England intended to confirm rights of property on the Indians. They treated them with tolerance and benevolence for political and humanitarian reasons, but nobody would have given rights of property to these children of the forests who are maintained in a state of tutelage.²⁷

The appellate decision was referred to the Privy Council in 1912; it categorically denied Aboriginal title to the land. The Privy Council "reflected the attitude that Aboriginal rights were granted by the Crown and were subject to change at the will of the Crown."²⁸ The Seminary continued to sell land.

In the 1930s, the Commons and other land used by the people of *Kanehsatà:ke*, was sold to a Belgian company. When this company found out that there might be an Indian claim to this land, they offered to co-operate, but the federal government referred them to the Sulpicians to resolve any questions about legal title. In 1941, the Sulpicians were unable to pay off a million dollar loan from the Province of Québec and they gave one hundred lots to the government; many of these lots were later transferred to the Municipality of Oka for one dollar.²⁹ In 1945, the remaining Sulpician land was given to the Crown on condition that the Fathers of St-Sulpice were released from any claims the Indians might have against them. Through these transactions, any land to which the *Kanehsata'kehró:non* might have laid claim was transferred to a combination of European private interests and various levels of government. There was a *de facto* attempt to end Aboriginal land rights. These transfers provided a "legal" basis for the development of a golf course in the early 1960s and eventually the attempt to expand the golf course in 1990. The period from 1960 to 1990 was marked by the growth of ethnonationalism among both Quebecers and Mohawks. We will examine that phenomenon and then return to the story of the golf course.

A Backdrop of Mohawk and Québécois Ethnonationalism

The conflict over the Pines is also about an expression of ethnonationalism. As André Picard noted, ten days into the crisis,

[i]ronically, the demands of Québec nationalists are very similar to those of Aboriginal nationalists: control over demography, education, the justice system, and freedom to pursue economic development. In fact, as nationhood has become a goal for Québec and the First Nations, there is a realization that the seemingly incompatible quests are inextricably linked.³⁰

Visible signs of ethnonationalism, with roots in each group's history, grew among both the *Québécois* and Mohawks in the 30 years before the 1990 crisis. Each has roots in the group's respective history.

Québécois ethnonationalism goes back to the previous century when the negative feelings over English hegemony exploded in the *Québécois* rebellion of the 1830s. The seigneurial system was abolished in the 1850s, making it possible for thousands of farmers to own their own land. The Québec church became more conservative, supporting a position that emphasized loyalty to the pope, over the French Gallican movement, for which the Church of France was more important. In the birth of Canada in 1867 there was a recognition that French Canadians were one of "two founding nations." The first half of the twentieth century was dominated by Maurice Duplessis, who reinforced traditional hegemonic structures within Québec as the people accepted direction from church and political leaders.

In the 1960s, with the election of the Lesage government and the Catholic reforms of Vatican II, came the Quiet Revolution. It involved a blossoming of *Québécois* culture with a concomitant evolution of a political vision summed up by the phrase *Maîtres chez nous* (Masters in our own house). The Quiet Revolution changed the landscape of Québec from a parochial, compliant society to a dynamic, assertive, and nationalistic province. This has had an impact on the whole of Canada. The FLQ Crisis of 1970 exposed a powerful ethnonationalism with territorial interests. This ethnonationalism gained political legitimacy through the election of *Parti Québécois* (PQ) premier René Lévesque in 1976. In 1980, a referendum was held on Québec sovereignty—it was defeated. During their time in office, the PQ established a pro-business environment that spawned a large number of French-speaking, Québec nationalist entrepreneurs.³¹ When Liberal premier Robert Bourassa's government succeeded the *Parti Québécois*, he became a strong exponent of nationalist—but not sovereigntist—sentiments through the 1980s.

Mohawk communities also experienced a growth in ethnonationalism in the 30-year period preceding the *Oka/Kanehsatà:ke* crisis. Gerald (Taiaiake) Alfred's concept of nesting helps conceptualize how developments in a broader Aboriginal context affected *Kanehsatà:ke*. Identities are nested within one another, progressing from the local people (*Kahnawa'keró:non* or *Kanehsata'keró:non*) to the Mohawk nation (*Kanien'kehà:ka*) to the Iroquois (*Rotinonhseshá:ka*) to the pan-Native (*Onkwehón:we*).³² As the Crisis of 1990 unfolded, the nested layers of identity came into play as solidarity was expressed for the *Kanehsata'kehró:non* from ever further distant parts of their identity groups. Most immediate however, was the involvement of people from *Kahnawà:ke* and Akwesasne; considering the close links among these three communities it is helpful to look at developments within and between each.

From the beginning, the *Kahnawà:ke* settlement had positioned itself as an independent linkage community, trading with disparate groups. Many of its members had come from the Mohawk River valley of New York and had brought a memory of close political ties with the Dutch. As British and French gained ascendancy, Mohawks became important traders with links to the French through their Jesuit-inspired Catholicism and links to the British through a history of commerce. They maintained neutrality during the American Revolution but played a key military role backing the British in the War of 1812. Throughout the colonial period, they kept trading and cultural ties with the wider Iroquois population. By 1926, however, the "Mohawks of Kahnawake had been politically distinct from the Iroquois Confederacy for 250 years."³³ That year, Paul Diabo of *Kahnawà:ke* was charged with being an illegal alien in the United States. The show of solidarity by the entire Six Nations Confederacy was a catalyst to the renewal of a traditional political order. Refused the use of the church hall for a meeting of the Grand Council, Mohawks constructed a Longhouse in *Kahnawà:ke*, re-creating ties both with the Confederacy and traditional political structures within the community.³⁴

During the 1950s there was a traditionalist revival in *Kahnawà:ke*. Louis Hall, a leader in this revival, and his followers were the more militant among the traditionalists; in contrast, chiefs like Tom Porter emphasized the peace teachings of the Great Law. Hall eventually became the guru for what came to be known as "Warrior Societies." His manifesto advocates violence:

Now that the Indians have the ability, not only to make peace but also to destroy the white man's peace, it is time to require Canada and the U.S. to render real and true justice to the true owners of this land by restoring some of the stolen lands.³⁵

Hall reinterpreted traditional Iroquois teachings in his own way, going so far as to advocate the execution of people who interpret the Great Law in more peaceful ways. He claimed that people like chiefs Tom Porter and Jake Swamp should be executed for treason. Ironically, Hall received the primary inspiration for his conversion to Longhouse religion from a Jewish lawyer and the impetus for his Manifesto from a Nazi who had been a colonel in Hitler's army. Hall recalled the Jewish lawyer saying, "You know a lot of us Jews have no use for any kind of religion, but we are members of our own national religion. We support our religion with money and our presence when needed. It is a force for unity and national survival."³⁶ His manifesto strongly influenced such people as Akwesasne War Chief Francis Boots and *Kahnawà:ke* warrior Paul Delaronde, both of whom played key roles in the 1990 crisis.³⁷

A key event that united the Mohawks was the move by Francis Johnson of Akwesasne to repossess the site of an ancient Mohawk village in New York as a response to the anticipated seizure of lands from *Kahnawà:ke* and Akwesasne to build the St. Lawrence Seaway. It encouraged militancy; it reframed the land issue, showing that land that had been taken could be repossessed; and it stimulated in

Mohawk imagination an even greater sense of being able to stand up to Euro-American government structures.

Gerald Alfred argues that at the heart of Mohawk ethnonationalism are identity, institutions, and interactions with Euro-Canadian society, particularly with the Government of Canada. The interactions with the most devastating effect on relationships with Canada have involved the expropriation of land to build the St. Lawrence Seaway and controversies over membership in the community. The expropriations occurred with no consultation; not only were many community members displaced, but the Seaway denied significant direct access to the river, impacting negatively on community quality of life. This was the most dramatic of a long series of land losses forced upon the community by the government.

The resultant nationalism "at its very core contains an imperative to resist further erosions of the community's national sovereignty"³⁸ and its ideology "at its core rejects Canada and turns inward toward the traditional ideal."³⁹ The bitter feelings about the Seaway prompted a traditionalist revival that in the long term generated syncretic institutions: the Mohawk Council of *Kahnawà:ke* has tended to incorporate traditional Mohawk teachings into its structure. From the controversies over membership came a complex approach to identity that laid out boundaries between its members and others based on a combination of "blood quantum," permanency of being Mohawk (if born Mohawk), participation in the life of the community, and knowledge of language and culture.

The interpretation of identity, interactions, and the development of institutions have been shaped by a political ideology that draws on the teachings of the Great Law. The Great Law system has been consolidated into three principles: "the achievement of sovereignty through the implementation of a traditional form of government; the strengthening of an identity of distinct peoplehood through a focus on ancestry; and the redress of historical injustices surrounding the dispossession of Mohawks from their traditional lands."⁴⁰ This dispossession was part of the reality in *Kanehsatà:ke* over the 30-year period from 1959 to 1989.

Developments in Oka/Kanehsatà:ke from 1959 to 1990

The municipality of Oka and the Mohawk Nation of *Kanehsatà:ke* reflected, on a micro scale, what was happening in the wider communities within which each was nested. The forces of nationalism with an impulse toward economic development, evident in Québec generally, were part of the reality for *Québécois* living at Oka; Mohawk nationalism, a resurgence of traditional teaching and an impulse to redress historic injustices, took on more and more significance during this time.

The *Kanehsata'keró:non* thought of themselves as a separate nation; they were the distant people, separated from the larger Mohawk communities to the southeast and southwest. They had learned their own unique way of surviving without a reserve with clear boundaries. In fact, the land of *Kanehsatà:ke* was a checkerboard of tracts of land within the municipality of Oka. The Commons, or Pines, became a centre for the spread-out community. People came together there for special

gatherings and sports events. A lacrosse playing field was established and an open area was used for powwows. Every year a Mohawk community picnic was held on July 1. The cemetery for the *Kanehsata'keró:non* was located in the Commons.

In 1945, the land known as the Commons was purchased by the Crown and in 1947 the land claimed by the Mohawks was sold to the town of Oka. In 1959, the Québec legislature passed a private members' bill giving the municipality of Oka permission to build a golf course on land constituting a portion of the Commons. The bill was sponsored by then Premier Paul Sauvé, the Member of the National Assembly for Oka. The Federal Government had the right to disallow the bill within a one-year period. The *Kanehsata'kehró:non* wrote to one government department after another asking them to disallow the bill but they were simply ignored until the year was up. In March 1961, James Montour and Samuel Nicholas appeared before the Joint Committee of the Senate and House of Commons on Indian Affairs with the following expression of their sentiments:

We the Six Nations Mohawk of Kanehsatà:ke, Lake of two Mountains, hold the Canadian Government responsible for our plight today.... By remaining criminally silent in the face of injustice, the Government is as legally and morally guilty, as the ones who committed the injustice, though they themselves did not take actual part in the proceedings.... For over a century, the controversy has been waged over this land to our detriment. We have opposed an organization far wealthier, far more influential. Our appeals have been strangled and thwarted in every instance, and our rights have been ignored. Let us this time, reverse the usual order and let Justice have its sway.⁴¹

These pleas fell on deaf ears and the golf course was built in 1961 beside a Mohawk cemetery. As the trees were falling, "the impoverished Mohawks scraped together \$50 and sent [Emile] Colas to Ottawa in an unsuccessful attempt to halt the work."⁴²

After the golf course was established, the municipality of Oka continued to grow and many fine homes were built near the golf course. The Mohawks experienced a resurgence of interest in Longhouse traditions and the Mohawk language. During the 1970s, the Mohawks made land claims to the Federal government. Mohawk pride was growing. A drug and alcohol treatment centre was built among the Pines between highway 344 and Lac des deux Montagnes. Euro-Canadians who owned houses in the vicinity had protested the building of the Treatment Centre because they thought it would devalue their homes and create other potential problems.

By the late 1980s, golfers wished to expand the golf course to eighteen holes, making it a full course. Developers prepared plans for the extra nine holes and included in the design 50 to 60 new homes around the outside perimeter. The mayor was a member and shareholder in the club.

In the Spring of 1989, Mayor Ouellette had unveiled plans for the golf course expansion and housing development. The Golf Club was to front the \$70,000 to

buy eighteen hectares of land for the city from Maurice Maxime (a.k.a. Clovis Arès, who left Canada because he embezzled clients' money) and Jean Michel Rousseau of France; the city in turn would lease the land to the golf course. Over the 30-year term of the lease the city would take in a million dollars. Besides this, there would be tax income from the 10 million dollar housing development planned by Maxime and Rousseau.⁴³ The plans were released without consulting the *Kanehsata'kehró:non*. A local environmental group, *Regroupement de protection de l'environnement*, collected 1,276 names on a petition against the project.⁴⁴ This showed that many *Québécois* were against the plans of the Oka Municipal Council.

The *Kanehsata'keró:non* were determined to prevent golf course expansion. Québec Native affairs minister John Ciaccia had grave concerns about the expanded course. Besides the fact that the Mohawks laid claim to the land, there was a concern for erosion if the trees were removed. There were calls for an environmental study. A number of non-Mohawk citizens of Oka opposed the development.

The Canadian Department of Indian Affairs convened negotiations to try to settle the land claims issue. In September 1989, they made a proposal that would have created a reserve by consolidating some of the land; this would have resolved jurisdictional problems.⁴⁵ It was agreed that the Mohawks present would consult with their people about this proposal; when it was presented to a gathering of their people, 201 out of 203 rejected it, with the remaining two abstaining.⁴⁶ Nonetheless, as late as July 1990, it was referred to as an "agreement" by the Minister of Indian Affairs.

Despite a series of public meetings and negotiations, the basic issue was non-negotiable on both sides: the Mayor of Oka, Jean Ouellette, and the developers were determined to build the golf course, and the *Kanehsata'kehró:non* were determined that the pines not be cut down. Meanwhile, there was an internal dispute over leadership of the *Kanehsatà:ke* Band. In January 1990, a group of clan mothers⁴⁷ removed Grand Chief Clarence Simon and replaced him with George Martin; the resulting feud was only one of several internal conflicts. The nine chiefs on the Band Council were appointed by clan mothers from the Turtle, Bear, and Wolf clans, but the Council needed approval from the Department of Indian Affairs to make any decisions. The *Kanehsata'kehró:non* League for Democracy and the Group for Change wanted to return to band elections, as had previously been the case under the Indian Act. On the other end of the spectrum was the small but outspoken Longhouse, which refused any jurisdiction of the Indian Act.⁴⁸ In addition to these rifts, there were cleavages based on religion.

Events Leading up to the Crisis

Despite a call by the Mohawks not to build the golf course until land claims were settled, the town and golf club were determined to proceed. On March 9, 1990, there was a board meeting at the golf club. A group of Mohawks prepared a statement for this meeting with groups inside the community putting aside their differences for the sake of the land. A delegation of five people including a youth,

Ellen Gabriel, and Allen Gabriel went to the municipal meeting where Allen read a petition to members of the board in the presence of a group that had gathered to protest. It seemed to no avail. Ellen recalls that "The French people started calling us names including savages!"

A group of Longhouse members met in the kitchen of the home of Walter David, Jr., to plan a strategy. Convinced that the trees could be cut at any time, they determined to set up an early warning system. The next day, they used John Cree's tractor to pull a fishing shack into the clearing at the Pines; the occupation had begun. When the people of *Kanehsatà:ke* heard that a camp was set up, many of them came to visit.⁴⁹

With the issue of the golf course unresolved, a number of Mohawks decided that they could not trust the federal government, the courts, or any other Canadian institution to look after their interests. They were afraid that the developers would simply move in and start cutting down trees. The only way they could prevent this was to maintain a twenty-four-hour presence in the Pines.

Men and women brought food and drinks to the people occupying the Pines. During the early days, older women came daily with food and coffee. Some teenage girls also tried to help:

Sixteen-year-old Myrna Gabriel and her two girlfriends became regulars, showing up at the fishing shack by five o'clock in the afternoon, and staying until after it got dark.... Myrna keeps a calendar marking all the important events in her day-to-day life, and March 31 is blocked off in bold red ink: the first time she slept overnight in the Pines. "It hit me, there were no other girls my age involved. We were there defending our land, while all these other teenagers were out partying it up. It made me proud."⁵⁰

Susan Oke went on night patrols with other women with "ugly sticks" for protection. For her, time spent around the sacred fire was part of rediscovering her Mohawk roots including the role of women in caring for the land. When the question of weapons came up,

[t]he armed men in the Pines asked the women to decide if the weapons should stay. As the traditional caretakers of the land, the women had the responsibility of dealing with this issue, but the decision was not one they wanted to make.... There were strong arguments for and against being armed.

Linda Cree had been an avowed anti-warrior, but the events that took place in the Pines changed her attitude. She was aware of the hazards but was equally afraid of the consequences of a police attack if the Mohawks were unarmed. Denise David-Tolley put it this way, "What choice did we have by then? We said, 'Bury them, hide them, keep them away. Only if they come in to harm us do you bring them out—only then'." After a pause she continued, "They came in to harm us."⁵¹

During this time, three men had been asked by the chief to represent the Mohawks. In a letter dated June 14, several women, who had played key roles, severed ties with other Longhouse negotiators, feeling that they had been left out. In their argument, they referred to the Great Law of Peace that states: "Women shall be considered the progenitors of the Nation. They shall own the land and the soil." *Kanehsatà:ke* Longhouse women in the Pines held daily women's meetings to keep their spirits up and discuss strategy.⁵² They determined to be the front line of defence and invited women from other reserves to join them in the protest camp.

An injunction against the barricade was granted by the Québec Superior Court on April 26. On May 1, the *Kanehsatà'kehró:non* gathered in the Pines, coming from the various factions. They were joined by people from *Kahnawà:ke*.⁵³ Later in May, Akwesasne war chief Francis Boots made two visits to the Pines and the Warriors supplied a Chevy Blazer patrol truck, two-way radios, food, tents, and other supplies. Some of the men in the Pines acquired weapons; others disapproved of the presence of arms. People were asked to come in as Mohawk people not affiliated with any particular group such as the Warriors.

A meeting between Mohawks and Indian Affairs minister Tom Siddon was set for June 21. Preparations for that meeting brought out tensions within the Mohawk community. The Longhouse people were critical of the band council's lawyer, Jacques Lacaille. June of 1990 was also a tense time for Canadians generally and the *Québécois* in particular; it was the deadline for the ratification of the Meech Lake Accord.

Three years before this, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and ten premiers had made an agreement on constitutional changes that would have paved the way for the Province of Québec to agree to the Canadian Constitution. The agreement stated that the Meech Lake Accord, as it was called, was to be approved by the ten legislatures and the Canadian parliament within three years. The deadline was June 23, 1990.

As the deadline approached, neither Manitoba nor Newfoundland had passed the Accord. Premier Clyde Wells of Newfoundland raised many questions about it, prompting concerned Canadians across the country to write him. His position was that he would support the Accord only if every other province passed it.

One reality of the Accord was that both its process and content excluded First Nations peoples. Assembly of First Nations (AFN) National Chief Georges Erasmus spoke out publicly against it. Aboriginal people were convinced that if the Accord passed, they would be shut out of constitutional recognition for many years to come.

One of the rules of procedure in the Manitoba legislature was that unanimous consent was necessary to move the vote on the Accord ahead in time to pass it by the deadline. Cree member of the Legislative Assembly, Elijah Harper, held an eagle feather as every day he refused to give consent to a motion that would have made it possible to pass the Meech Lake Accord. He was assisted in this strategy by Ovide Mercredi, a constitutional lawyer who was then Vice-Chief of the AFN. The Mulroney government was so intent on getting Harper's co-operation, they sent a

high-powered team led by Senator Lowell Murray and that included Stanley Hartt, the prime minister's chief of staff; Paul Tellier, clerk of the Privy Council; and Norman Spector, secretary to the cabinet for Federal-Provincial Relations to try to win Harper's co-operation. He and his colleagues rejected the six-point offer as "trinkets."⁵⁴ When it became clear that Manitoba would not pass the Accord, Newfoundland also refused to pass it and it died on June 23.

During the period leading up to the deadline, Prime Minister Mulroney told the people of Québec and Canada that the failure of Meech would mean the rejection of Québec and could tear up the country. Around that time some anti-French actions in Canada were broadcast repeatedly on Québec television. The failure of Meech resulted in a tremendous letdown within Québec and within the Conservative Government of the time. Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and Québec Premier Robert Bourassa had both staked their political futures and place in history on the passing of the Accord. It was to reconcile French and English. When the Accord was defeated in June, Mulroney disappeared from public view for most of the following summer and Bourassa and his *Parti Québécois* opponent Jacques Parizeau were united in their belief that Québec would have to take charge of its own destiny.

On June 29, the lawyer for the Municipality of Oka sought a third injunction to have roadblocks removed from the Pines. Judge Anthime Bergeron granted the injunction and gave the Mohawks ten days to leave. Every day there were new ultimatums from the Oka municipal council as tensions increased. Sam Elkas, Québec Public Security Minister, "announced that the Mohawks must clear the barricades within four days or else the government would take action. He did not specify what kind of action the Mohawks should expect, but the threat of police intervention was implicit."⁵⁵ Allen Gabriel urged that the barricades be dismantled and left the Pines with his two allies. Ellen Gabriel and John Cree became the key spokespersons for the Mohawks. The Québec Human Rights Commission proposed an independent committee to sort out land rights. Their telegram to Tom Siddon received no response until four months later but Québec Native Affairs Minister John Ciaccia affirmed his support the same day.⁵⁶ Police increased their patrols and were put on standby.

On July 9, John Ciaccia wrote Mayor Ouellette urging him not to call in the police or act quickly on the golf course expansion. He argued that the situation went beyond strict legality. Here is an excerpt from his letter:

These issues go beyond the strict legality of the situation as interpreted by our tribunals, which base themselves on laws put into place by our society, laws which do not necessarily answer to the claims of Native people.

We are often accused by Native people of not taking into account their claims and of reneging on our commitments.

The situation at Oka gives credibility to these accusations...

I am aware that our laws are on your side in the case of the injunction, but I believe that the present situation goes beyond strict legality. As premier

René Lévesque said during a debate in the National Assembly, concerning the application of a certain law, sometimes "the law is an ass." And if that is the case, those who are elected should not hide behind the laws, but rather act in a generous and responsible manner.⁵⁷

The next day, Jean Ouellette accused Ciaccia of not understanding native issues and requested the Sûreté du Québec "to clear the barricades and stop the 'criminal acts' in the Pines. 'We are counting on you to settle this problem without any further delays or requests on our part', Ouellette told the police in a letter."⁵⁸ John Cree, Mohawk spokesperson at *Kanehsatà:ke*, voiced their determination to do "whatever is necessary to defend" the land. When asked about guns he said, "Whatever the police do, we will match. That's up to them... but this is not a joking matter."⁵⁹ Warriors continued to strengthen their positions by digging foxholes, stringing fish lines with noisemakers and hooks, and setting "booby traps." Two days after the deadline expired, the morning of July 11, police cruisers raced through the town. Denise David-Tolley, asleep in the Pines, tossed restlessly dreaming about an attack. In her dream, someone died.⁶⁰

The SQ Raid

Early on the morning of July 11, 1990, a hundred members of the Sûreté du Québec SWAT team, including some army personnel and Montreal police, drove west along highway 344 to the area where the barricade had been erected within the Pines. In the clearing around the barricade, a number of women were having their early morning ceremonies around the fire, and John Cree was burning tobacco for the whole group. The SQ officers came in along two lines, one along highway 344 on the southern edge of the land under dispute. The other was along a side road on the eastern edge of the Pines. They had come prepared with body bags for casualties. For over two hours they held their positions. They brought in a loader to clear away the barricade.

The Mohawk people had positioned themselves in the Pines on the north and west sides of the clearing; the women were in the clearing just behind the barricade. The police shot canisters of gas toward the women but the winds from the North sent the gas toward the police. At about 8:30 a.m., one of the Mohawk men ran into the Pines. Three officers ran after him in the direction of the lacrosse box. Shooting started and it came rapidly from both sides for 23 seconds. When it was over, Corporal Lemay had been shot. The SQ seemed unprepared for the strength of the armed resistance. They immediately got into their cars and left the area. Corporal Lemay was rushed to a hospital in an ambulance. He died in less than an hour.

Because of the hasty departure, keys were left in the cars as well as in the loader. As soon as the police left, the Mohawks moved some of the police cruisers across the road to block highway 344 and smashed them with the loader. In all six police vehicles were damaged.⁶¹

Francis Boots looked on in horror as the vehicles were demolished. "No, no, don't destroy those damned things," he pleaded. "We can use them. We can use the radios."

But it was too late. The Mohawks—including many people who had never set foot in the Pines to help the protesters during the early days of the roadblock—were united in an orgy of destruction, a collective venting of anger.⁶²

As soon as the SQ began moving on the barricade in the Pines, the people of *Kahnawà:ke* learned of the situation by radio. Word spread quickly through the community. A dozen Mohawk men, acting on their own, quickly blocked the Mercier Bridge, a bridge joining the South Shore of the St. Lawrence River to Montreal. Their experience as steel builders made it easy for them to move on the girders of the bridge. They tied flares resembling dynamite together and fastened them to some bridge supports and threatened to blow up the bridge if they were attacked. As the conflict became more intense and polarized, the people of *Kahnawà:ke* felt they had no choice but to support the blockade.

A second attack on the Pines was being planned by the SQ. The Mohawks made two parallel but uncoordinated efforts to prevent it. In Montreal, *Kanehsatà:ke* lawyer Jacques Lacaille made 45 phone calls to Québec government officials who did not take the situation seriously. After a warning of a second attack from the SQ, he got through to Premier Bourassa and told him that one officer was dead. Meanwhile Ellen Gabriel, spokesperson for the *Kanehsata'kehró:non*, announced that if any Mohawks were hurt, Mercier Bridge would fall. The second attack did not materialize.⁶³

Within hours after the initial raid, the police set up their own barricades on highway 344 opposite the Mohawk barricades. These barricades controlled access to the Pines, initially blocking all food, medicine, diapers, clothing, and family members. Some officers within the SQ had a history of bad relationships with Mohawks; there were also a number of officers with a good bit of sympathy for Mohawk grievances.

The Mohawks made good use of the loader. Besides building up the barricades, they brought it into the Pines to dig bunkers at various strategic locations. These bunkers would become home for the warriors for the next two months. They commandeered golf carts and established positions through the Pines and the golf course. Additional Aboriginal people found their way into the Pines to help.

With the events at *Kanehsatà:ke* and *Kahnawà:ke*, the entire Mohawk nation became implicated in the struggle that now involved the government of the Province of Québec. Primary negotiations during this time period were with members of the provincial cabinet, especially John Ciaccia, Minister for Indian Affairs.

On July 16, a funeral was held near Québec City for Corporal Lemay. Nearly a thousand attended to hear him eulogized by Robert Lavigne, the director of the

Québec Police who had ordered the attack. At the Pines, the Mohawks flew their flag at half mast since they "consider all life as precious as the Earth itself."⁶⁴

The Crisis Intensifies

Within days, the crisis intensified, igniting passions throughout Canada and turning world attention to Oka, *Québec*. Some fourteen factors helped escalate the conflict and we look at each:

1. Reinforcements brought in on both sides and perceptions of greater strength
2. Hardships experienced by people in Oka and Châteauguay
3. Mob action
4. Festering resentment over the killing of Corporal Lemay
5. Protests against government action
6. Actions of local politicians
7. Blocking of food supplies
8. Growing support of Mohawks by other First Nations
9. Harassment of a number of groups involved
10. Vandalism of *Québécois* property
11. Attention of international community and institutions
12. Controversy over negotiations
13. Inflammatory treatment of symbols
14. Entrenchment of positions

First, both police and the Mohawk community got reinforcements and there was a mutual perception that strength on the other side was stronger than it actually was. By July 13, additional police reinforcements brought their number to a thousand.⁶⁵ On Thursday, July 12, the SQ asked the military base at Val-Cartier for an inventory of soldiers and equipment. Though soldiers and military equipment had been in the area on July 9, by July 16 there was a movement from Val-Cartier near Québec City to Longue Pointe garrison in east-end Montreal.⁶⁶ One Warrior boasted that the Mohawks had mortars, land mines, and grenades in addition to a wide assortment of guns.⁶⁷ In Montreal, the threat to blow up the bridge was given credibility by France Goupil, president of *Géophysique GPR International Incorporated*, a firm in the business of demolishing buildings who said it would take only two to three hours to install the explosives.⁶⁸

Second, the blockades caused hardships for the citizens of Oka and Châteauguay, and they called for strong action to rectify the situation. The blockade made the commute to Montreal from Châteauguay at least an hour-and-a-half-longer. When the crisis began, many Châteauguay residents had supported the Aboriginal cause, but the stress caused by long commuting times eventually led to feelings of frustration that exacerbated tensions. Anger was directed at both the Government, which should do something about it, and the Mohawks for barricading the bridge.

The SQ sealed off the roads going into *Kahnawà:ke*.⁶⁹ Some businesses in Oka experienced a drop in business.⁷⁰ Residents had difficulty getting to their homes.

Third, the frustration in Châteauguay brought out mob action that was mainly directed towards anyone who looked like a Mohawk but eventually turned on the police. Mobs burned Mohawks in effigy, sometimes yelling repeatedly, "Burn the savages." On July 13, grandmother Betty Coles was angry at the Mohawks over the bridge closing. After watching a mob besieging a Mohawk woman in the grocery store, she was so disgusted with the mob action that she called the *Kahnawà:ke* radio station to ask how she could help supply food to them.⁷¹ As she put her efforts into helping the Mohawks, the scene of the barricades turned into a daily "hatefest."⁷²

Many who participated in the mob action came from outside Châteauguay. The mobs did not represent the attitudes and positions of the entire community and took on a life of their own.

On July 15, the burning of the warrior in effigy was accompanied by a thousand people howling mocking war whoops.⁷³ They painted a red target on the effigy's chest, stuffed a cigarette pack in its pocket and placed a noose around its neck. The crowd chanted "F— the Warriors! the damned savages."⁷⁴ Sylvain Leblanc, of Châteauguay, who was responsible for one of the effigies, stated, "I have nothing against the Indians. I am angry at the gun-toting Warriors who are the equivalent of the Indian Mafia."⁷⁵ Sharon Fournier found the burning "disgusting," and pointed out that many "don't understand the Indians' plight."⁷⁶

Bourassa was also burned in effigy because he did not act more quickly to call in the army.

On July 18, three hundred RCMP came to aid the SQ in controlling the crowds in Châteauguay.⁷⁷ Local roads were clogged. It was reported that one man lost his job because of the bridge closing.⁷⁸

Fourth, within the Government of Québec and the SQ there was hurt and anger over the killing of Corporal Lemay and a concomitant desire to lay blame. Even Premier Bourassa was said to be very angry. Both the Government and the SQ lost face over their failure to achieve their goals and the ignominy with which the police left the scene. All government ministers who might have been responsible at the time (many were on vacation so responsibility was passed on to others) denied having given approval for the raid. Indian Affairs Minister John Ciaccia even went on record saying that he had told Mayor Ouellette not to call in the SQ.⁷⁹

Fifth, there were numerous protests about the attack and government action. Much of the rhetoric of protest was very graphic, using metaphors that strongly denounced both police and government. As tension mounted in *Kahnawà:ke* over the closing of Mercier bridge, Goldie Hershon of the Canadian Jewish Congress sent a letter to the Mayor of Châteauguay suggesting "that the daily burning of effigies and the expressions of racism have contributed to a deterioration of the climate for negotiation."⁸⁰ Jean Dorion of the St. Jean Baptiste Society pointed out that native rights had been denied for hundreds of years and "their grievances must be considered in this context and not treated in narrow legalistic terms."⁸¹ Michelle

Falardeau-Ramsay, deputy chief commissioner of the Canadian Human Rights Commission, criticized Indian Affairs Minister Tom Siddon for inaction, claiming that Canada's international image had been tarnished: "Imagine what would be our reaction if it was in another country," she said. "We would say: Isn't that awful that they use such tactics. They are not allowing the Red Cross vehicles to bring food. They don't allow a supply of drugs to come in."⁸² The Human Rights Institute of Canada referred to the raid as "insane."⁸³ Three Québec bishops called for negotiations instead of force.⁸⁴

Sixth, local politicians spoke up against Mohawk actions. The Mayor of Châteauguay, Jean-Bosco Bourcier, threatened to launch a class action suit against the Province for the losses of south shore residents who had trouble getting to work. In defence of his community, he insisted that those making racist remarks were not from Châteauguay: "Rather," he said, "there is a small group of about 200 young people, mostly from Montreal, who try to provoke police because they have been beaten by other police forces in the past."⁸⁵ He reportedly stated a preference that "residents vent their frustration by burning Mohawks in effigy" rather than "disrupt life in the community."⁸⁶ Furthermore he charged that his people are "innocent victims in a larger dispute over native land claims."⁸⁷ Both mayors and crowds blamed provincial and federal governments for not taking appropriate action. Châteauguay MP Ricardo Lopez asked Brian Mulroney to send in the army.⁸⁸

In Oka, Mayor Ouellette left for a few days because of reported death threats but continued to stand by his decision to call in the SQ. A group of mayors from the surrounding area met to declare their support for Ouellette. They began to point out that there was more at stake, since a huge portion of Québec was subject to Indian land claims. Deputy Mayor Gilles Landreville replied in the affirmative when asked about taking the barricades by force.⁸⁹ Guy Dubé, from an Oka citizens' group favourable to the mayor, "blamed the dispute on a group of radical Mohawks, 'prone to terrorism and blackmail'."⁹⁰ And on July 15, Gilles Landreville, then acting mayor of Oka, criticized the government "for holding talks with 'armed criminals.'"⁹¹

On July 23, Harry Swain, deputy minister of Indian Affairs, claimed that the Mohawk Warriors were a "criminal organization" who had hijacked *Kahnawà:ke* and *Kanehsatà:ke*. Theirs was a "potent combination of cash, guns, and ideology," he said, describing the crisis as an "insurrection" by an "armed gang."⁹²

A seventh evidence of conflict intensification occurred when food supplies to both *Kahnawà:ke* and *Kanehsatà:ke* were blocked, in effect using food as a weapon. In some cases, residents couldn't get through to their homes and relatives. In one case a 69-year-old woman was denied access to food. The police were afraid that some food would get to Mohawks behind the barricades.

Angry store owners in Châteauguay refused to sell food to Mohawks. Many Mohawks would not venture into the city anyway because they had been "yelled and jeered at and even pelted with stones."⁹³ Jocelyne Desrosiers, a store owner in Châteauguay open to Mohawk business, was asked by vigilantes to close her store, with the threat that the window might have an "accident" if she didn't. Police told

her they couldn't guarantee a rapid response to a distress call.⁹⁴ At the same time, thirty sympathetic whites formed a food pipeline to get food into *Kahnawà:ke*.⁹⁵ The Federation of Chinese Students and Visiting Scholars in Canada and Montreal's Chinese community donated food to the Mohawks of *Kanehsatà:ke* and *Kahnawà:ke*.

On July 13, an SQ official told a member of the Québec Human Rights Commission that "there was no question of [allowing] 'individuals of native origin' to cross the police barricades with provisions."⁹⁶ Contrary to Québec's Charter of Rights and Freedoms, no Commission representative was allowed access to investigate.⁹⁷ On July 21, Québec Cabinet minister Claude Ryan said that "the refusal to allow food into Mohawk communities was official government policy, not police vindictiveness."⁹⁸ A few days later Ciaccia told reporters, "There was never any question of depriving them of food."⁹⁹

Commenting on the tactic of blocking food, Frank Chalk, a Concordia University historian and genocide expert, commented that "deprivation of food as a pressure tactic should not be permitted in a democratic society under any circumstances."¹⁰⁰ Red Cross doctors and nurses checked the situation and determined that there was no food crisis. Some native groups responded to the food crisis by organizing a food bank and delivering food by boat. Some Mohawks, though, smuggled food into the reserve and charged three times what perishables would normally cost.¹⁰¹

An Aboriginal woman named Claudette Commenda-Cote put the food issue into historical perspective: "One hundred years ago the governments starved our people into signing treaties. It is 1990 and the methods are the same. We demand that the police action must be stopped."¹⁰²

Eighth, within a day or two of the raid, other First Nations began supporting the Mohawks of *Kanehsatà:ke*. Initial support came from Matthew Coon Come of the Northern Cree and then Conrad Sioui, Vice-Chief of the AFN for Québec and head of the Québec chiefs, joined. Ovide Mercredi, then AFN Vice-President for Manitoba, collected food and financial support for the Mohawks, only weeks after he had discussed scuttling the Meech Lake Accord with Elijah Harper. These leaders argued that the structure of the conflict and oppression resembled the situation faced by other First Nations, emphasizing that 85 per cent of the territory of Québec was under dispute. They pointed out that Mohawks had endured some of the longest oppression (350 years) of any First Nations in Canada.

On July 17, in a march on Parliament Hill "speaker after speaker condemned [Indian Affairs Minister Tom] Siddon and Prime Minister Brian Mulroney for not intervening in the dispute."¹⁰³

More than one hundred chiefs from across the country went to *Kahnawà:ke* for an emergency meeting. They were challenged to form "a country wide network of warrior societies, likened to a standing army, to defend native lands" and to set up road barriers.¹⁰⁴ Their nine-point resolution included a promise to take appropriate action in support of Mohawks. They also passed a resolution expressing condolences to the family and friends of Marcel Lemay.¹⁰⁵

At their gathering, Conrad Sioui, Québec chief of the Family of First Nations, stated that "there is a direct link between (the current crisis) and Meech Lake."¹⁰⁶ He accused Mulroney and Bourassa of being in collusion and blamed both for this situation. Other chiefs joined in blaming Bourassa and the "Conservative government and its separatist buddies"¹⁰⁷ for the crisis.

Gerard Guay, a lawyer for the Algonquin Indians of Barrier Lake, warned on July 14 that this could spark "Indian warfare" across the county. Russell Diabo, a Mohawk working with the Algonquins, called the crisis a tinder-box situation resulting from "centuries of frustration across the country." He reported that "Indians in Quebec will be backing up the Mohawks—this isn't just a Mohawk situation like the press have painted it."¹⁰⁸

There were many other signs of support: Micmac children in Nova Scotia went on a hunger strike; Indians of Baie Comeau threatened to block the provincial highway; Lillooet and Chilcotin Indians blocked roads in British Columbia; and young Saulteaux Indians blocked a road in Manitoba against the wishes of their leaders.¹⁰⁹ In addition, residents of the Roseau River reserve in Manitoba blocked a secondary highway.¹¹⁰ Micmacs of Restigouche slowed traffic on an interprovincial bridge and Algonquins of Barrier Lake slowed campers in their area.¹¹¹ Residents of the Grand Rapids Reserve closed one of the major highways to northern Manitoba; Ojibways blocked one lane of traffic on the Trans-Canada highway near Georgian Bay and distributed pamphlets to motorists. In Alberta, chiefs threatened blockades and power transmission line destruction. Enoch Cree Nation Chief Jerome Morin stated that the province could be shut down.¹¹² Sixty natives marched on the Québec legislature to support the Mohawks because "their action... affects all natives in Canada," according to Ghislain Picard, vice-president of the Attikamek-Montagnais council.¹¹³

On July 18, one week after the raid, Chief Billy Two Rivers of *Kahnawà:ke* said on CTV's *Canada AM*, "I'm sure that our people will defend to the end. But that is not the way. If they want to wipe out the Indian people and commit genocide, then call the army in because we will fight to the last man and woman and children."¹¹⁴

Besides the actions of support, a new attitude was evident among Aboriginal peoples. Native leaders mentioned that Aboriginal people no longer blamed themselves for their problems. Georges Erasmus stated that Canada's political leaders "are the clearly defined enemy, not the Canadian people." Phil Fontaine of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs said, "For years, our suicide rate shows our frustrations have historically been turned inward. Now the frustration appears to be turned outward. Our people have been sensitized. We no longer blame ourselves."¹¹⁵

At a Manitoba conference of three hundred native leaders, Peguis Chief Louis Stevenson called for a violent response if the police or army attacked the Mohawks. Blackfoot Chief Strater Crowfoot said, "Throughout history, whenever there were confrontations, it was always the Indians who laid down their arms first, and we know what happened to them. So this time, we are saying no." Saul Terry, president of the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, said to the Warriors,

"You have successfully protected your territory and citizens. In doing this, you have forcefully asserted the Mohawk Nation's sovereign right of self-defence in the face of government propaganda, deception, manipulation and military power. You have shown First Nation citizens throughout Canada that direct action can speak louder than words, and that sometimes this is the only way our peoples' voice can be heard."¹¹⁶

Liberal MP Ethel Blondin said she could never denounce the Warriors since they symbolized the struggle "to defend our land and our rights." Alanis Obomsawin, an Abenaki Indian film-maker who hated violence, pointed out that Aboriginal people were ignored until they picked up weapons.¹¹⁷

In addition to the high profile support, hundreds of Canadian Aboriginal people came to help. For example, on July 15 nine Micmacs arrived at *Kahnawà:ke* and on July 16 four of them made it to *Kanehsatà:ke*. They were motivated in part by the wrongful imprisonment of cousin Donald Marshall for a murder he didn't commit.¹¹⁸ Others who came to help were a "hundred Oneidas from New York, Wisconsin, and southwestern Ontario; an Algonquin from northwestern Quebec; and Indian women from several regions of British Columbia and the Yukon."¹¹⁹

Ninth, the Mohawks were harassed by police and residents, and residents by Mohawks. One Mohawk man who claimed to be unarmed during the police raid was detained and roughed up after the police retreat. That convinced him to join in the fighting: "Now it doesn't matter whether I stay at home or come out here with my gun. Any time I take a step off this territory, they'll be all over me. They know who I am, and it's not going to end. After all of this has blown over, the harassment is going to continue, and even worse."¹²⁰

In Oka, in addition to the death threats to Mayor Jean Ouellette, members of a community association that supported the Mayor were threatened and feared reprisals if the police left.¹²¹ In Châteauguay, Aboriginal people were threatened on the street; some were too afraid to take the bus to work.¹²²

Tenth, a group of Mohawks, including non-Natives who were coming over by boat, vandalized property in the vicinity of the Pines. One of the first to be vandalized was the clubhouse of the Oka Golf Club. When the Mohawks occupied it, it was reported that the kitchen and bar were littered with smashed beer bottles, rotting food, and broken club trophies that had been ripped from glass showcases. Files, papers, and membership lists covered the office floor.¹²³ In addition, the glass door was smashed, lockers were broken open, and telephone lines were cut.

Eleventh, the international community began to pay attention to the conflict. Protests were made to the United Nations and there were calls for international observers. Kenneth Deer of the Longhouse went to Geneva on July 20 to visit embassies and a UN human rights organization; he subsequently reported to an Aboriginal conference.¹²⁴ At the *Kahnawà:ke* meeting of chiefs, Joe Norton suggested economic sanctions against Canada similar to those invoked against South Africa for apartheid. He stated that the Canadian government treats natives in a similar manner to the way in which the South African government treats blacks.

Leader of the Opposition, Jean Chrétien, said at the same meeting that the crisis has "escalated to the point that it is an issue in Europe today."¹²⁵

On July 20, a *Kanehsatà:ke* negotiator pointed out that the barricades would be removed in short order if the matter were referred to the World Court at the Hague.¹²⁶ The group of chiefs also advocated a United Nations commission to investigate the "abuses and violations of the civil, political, human and constitutional rights of the *Kanehsatà:ke* and *Kahnawà:ke* Mohawks."¹²⁷

Twelfth, over the first days and weeks of the crisis, Québec Native Affairs Minister John Ciaccia carried on negotiations in *Kanehsatà:ke*. These negotiations provided some hope but also occasioned criticism about who was involved in the negotiations and whether they were carried on in good faith. Some Mohawks did not think it appropriate to negotiate with a province; they wanted to negotiate with Canada on a nation-to-nation basis. Within the federal government, Indian Affairs Minister Tom Siddon believed that it was inappropriate to negotiate with an armed group:

...I think all Canadians will want to ask themselves the question should their government, any government, be held hostage to the demands of the group which does not have an elected or democratic mandate to speak for the majority of the people of that community, to be held hostage in the face of armed intimidation in this way. And then to ask where these powerful automatic weapons are coming from, AK-47s, and even more powerful assault equipment, some of which was used against most of the folks of Akwesasne only two months ago. How is that kind of armament being used within this democratic county of ours to create a state of insurrection and place demands on governments in this way.¹²⁸

Though the negotiations and requests for negotiations were meant to move the conflict toward resolution they also introduced other secondary conflicts.

Thirteenth, a variety of symbols provoked strong feelings. On July 14, four anglophones carried a Canadian flag into the crowd at Châteauguay. They were surrounded by francophones, some carrying Québec flags. Police escorted one to safety as two hundred people chanted, "*Québec, Québec*."¹²⁹ Later that night between six and seven hundred people, led by youths carrying *fleurs-de-lys*, rushed the barricades. The crowd grew to a thousand and "roared its approval" as some tried to burn a Canadian flag. When it didn't burn it was ripped in shreds, people stomped on it and chanted, "*Le Québec aux Québécois*" and "*Vive le Québec libre*."¹³⁰ Teenagers on top of a Châteauguay bus stop displayed sheets reading "American Mohawks go home" and, in French, "Mohawks are filthy savages."¹³¹ On the other side of the barricade, Mohawks chanted and drummed, taunted the crowds, pointed weapons at the crowds, and burned a Québec *fleur-de-lys*.¹³²

On July 15, Irene O'Brien Neal, a Châteauguay woman wearing a Canadian flag on her sweatshirt, was jumped from behind by two women who punched and gouged her face as they tried to tear off an Indian necklace. Police stood by; eventually they intervened, asking the woman to leave and telling her that her

sweater was provocative.¹³³ One of the women who attacked her called the maple leaf "an insult to all Quebecers."¹³⁴ Neal, for her part, didn't want to cause problems. "I just came here to support the natives," she said.¹³⁵

Fourteenth, entrenched positions generated their own dynamics. Two American lawyers came to help the Mohawks present their case: Stanley Cohen, a New York lawyer passionately committed to their cause, followed by civil rights lawyer William Kunstler, who had defended some members of the American Indian Movement after the Wounded Knee stand-off. Kunstler was in *Kanehsatà:ke* for a day and in the area for only a short while. Cohen eventually became the more dominant influence:

Around July 21, [Owen] Young arrived in Kanesatake by motorboat to meet Cohen, but he never made it off the beach. After a brief conversation with the New York lawyer, it was obvious to Young that Cohen's radical fervour would pose serious problems. In Young's view, Cohen was interested less in helping the Mohawks negotiate an end to the dispute than in encouraging them to take no-win positions. He jumped back in the motorboat and left in disgust.¹³⁶

Within the Québec government, a crisis committee was set up, led by Claude Ryan. This reduced the maneuverability of John Ciaccia, who declared that the Mohawk demands were out of his jurisdiction. Premier Bourassa "was emphatic that there would be no negotiations on the question of possible criminal charges arising from the crisis."¹³⁷ On the federal side, Tom Siddon kept repeating that there could be no negotiations with guns and barricades in the picture.

In a matter of a few days, this local conflict had escalated to an event pitting First Nations of Québec and other parts of Canada against the Government of Québec and the SQ, and Mohawks throughout Québec against citizens, local government, and the Québec government. Social justice groups joined in solidarity with the Mohawk cause.

As the conflict escalated, the Mohawks of *Kanehsatà:ke*, *Kahnawà:ke*, and Akwesasne united as they had not done for a long time. The various factions of *Kanehsatà:ke* began working together. In *Kahnawà:ke*, the small group that had acted on its own was supported by the entire Warrior Society and then, reluctantly at first but with increasing resolve, the elected band council supported their action.

Over the next months, the escalation in these fourteen areas continued. As tension was increasing, residents from the Onen'tó:kon Treatment Centre, across highway 344 from the disputed land, were sent elsewhere.¹³⁸ Eventually the Centre would become the last holdout for the Mohawks. Meanwhile in Québec City, after the first week of the crisis, Bourassa stated that he had no intention of requesting intervention from the Canadian Army. He also voiced regret that there had not been better coordination between the SQ and politicians before the raid.¹³⁹

A Mixture of Passions

Within the first ten days after the attack the crisis intensified significantly. A number of passions emerged within Canada. Over the next 30 days, many deep, contradictory passions would churn; the whole nation would be affected. There were resolves to "not give in" on many sides of issues and fears of violence and significant loss of life. A passion to find a peaceful settlement also existed, in part for reasons of Canadian identity and, in the case of politicians, for their place in history. There were intense negotiations on the one hand and rioting on the other.

Within Châteauguay, the mob action became better organized. Yvon Poitra, a retired SQ officer and an aspirant to the Mayor's office, organized *Solidarité Châteauguay* to demand military intervention. On August 1, they led a march of 10,000 people.¹⁴⁰ Gilles Proulx of Montreal's CJMS gave the group media support: "Proulx was loved by thousands of South Shore listeners because he professed to understand the frustrations of the Châteauguay mobs and was not afraid to verbally pummel and abuse the Mohawk warriors on the air."¹⁴¹ The protest also attracted fringe groups like white supremacist members of the Aryan Nation and Longitude 74, a branch of the Ku Klux Klan.¹⁴²

From the beginning, there were strong opposing factions within the Québec government. On July 14, Native Affairs Minister John Ciacchia had negotiated an agreement to open Mercier Bridge; no one in *Kahnawà:ke* would be prosecuted over the blockade, *Kanehsatà:ke* Mohawks would co-operate with a police investigation, and many police would be withdrawn. Hawks in the cabinet balked at the agreement. One official stated that "you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs." Instead of withdrawing, the police dug in even more and the deal fell through.¹⁴³ According to Ellen Gabriel, the agreement failed because it was made with individuals who did not inform all the people.

In the town of Oka passions on both sides of the issue were strong. One antique dealer who called for reconciliation with the Mohawks had a rock thrown through his window. Petitions were circulated on both sides of the issue: one side calling for the mayor's resignation, the other supporting his stand.¹⁴⁴

When Ovide Mercredi and other representatives of the Assembly of First Nations arrived on August 4, there was a significant conflict between different factions within the *Kanehsatà:ke* group. Those who were with the Longhouse accused the AFN representatives of being government agents since they recognized the Indian Act. The split, which broke out more openly on August 5, was based in part on a sense of cliquishness perceived on the part of the negotiating team.¹⁴⁵ On that day, Premier Bourassa gave a 48-hour ultimatum to the Mohawks to take down the barricades. That ultimatum united the Mohawks and precipitated an exodus of non-natives and about a third of the Mohawk community from *Kanehsatà:ke*. Peter Diome, a warrior spokesperson stated, "We are one people, one nation, and we will not be brought to our knees before anyone."¹⁴⁶ When the deadline expired in the afternoon of August 8, Bourassa invoked the National Defence Act and called on the Canadian Forces to replace the SQ.

Within the Oka council, there were strong feelings about selling the disputed land to the federal government. There was thunderous applause in the council chambers as an angry taxpayer said, "I'm insulted, I tell you, I'm insulted to think that you would sell these lands to the federal government."¹⁴⁷ On August 8, after a threat of expropriation, the council regretfully accepted a deal giving them \$3.84 million for the land that they had bought from the developer for \$70,000.¹⁴⁸

Some of the deepest passions were ignited by symbolic acts. On August 12 a deal was signed in the open space of the Pines with Tom Siddon representing Canada. The late Walter David, Sr., signed on behalf of the people since he was secretary of the Longhouse at the time. At the last minute, unknown to the people of *Kanehsatà:ke*, a warrior with his face covered, codenamed "4-20," signed for the Mohawks of Akwesasne. After it was over, he presented a Warrior Society flag to mediator Alan Gold. The signing ceremony was met with fury among Quebecers.¹⁴⁹

While the signing was taking place in the Pines, *Solidarité Châteauguay* focused on the St. Louis de Gonzague Bridge that crossed the St. Lawrence Seaway. They planned to use their cars to thwart the revolving segment of the bridge, blocking the Seaway. Eighty officers tried to control the crowd. One had his helmet torn off and was beaten. Seven people, including Yvon Poitras, were arrested. When the crowd tried to free the seven, the police locked themselves in the detachment offices. The crowd moved on to the Mercier barricades for the worst rioting since the crisis began.¹⁵⁰

This time, the Mohawks were all but forgotten by the mob. After the confrontation on the St. Louis de Gonzague Bridge, the police were now the enemy, and the crowd's fury was directed at them. By 9:30 p.m. the mob had swelled to several thousand. Once again, it was a family affair. More than one man arrived with a baseball bat in one hand and a child gripping the other. Someone climbed onto a police cruiser and smashed its dome light and its windshield. With that act of vandalism, a collective roar went up in the crowd. Young men advanced menacingly towards the line of officers, waving baseball bats and tire-irons, rattling the metal gate that separated the police from the mob.... Protesters peeled chunks of pavement off the roadside curbs, heaving them and anything else they could lay their hands on—eggs, bricks, rocks—at the police. RCMP officers, called in to reinforce the Sûreté du Québec, stood shoulder to shoulder on the front line, protecting the SQ officers behind them.... One middle-aged policeman was struck in the chest with a flying brick and collapsed on the ground.¹⁵¹

When the mob lit fires, opened a fire hydrant, and smashed police vehicles, the police used tear gas and then charged:

Once again, journalists were a target for the mob's rage. About thirty angry men surrounded a radio reporter, wrestling with her, trying to tear away the purse where she had hidden her recording equipment. "If you stay here one

more second you won't have a face!" one man screamed at her. Two or three men pursued her down the street until she got to her car and drove away.¹⁵²

When the riot was over, 35 people had been taken to the hospital. Ten of these were RCMP officers. A number of RCMP resented that they had been placed between the SQ and the crowd, taking the brunt of the mob anger directed toward the SQ. In the following days, the SQ changed tactics and started to mingle with the crowds; this significantly reduced violence.¹⁵³

Overall, the SQ suffered greatly through the crisis. They were humiliated by their initial pull-back on July 11, and they lost one of their officers. They were supplanted by the RCMP and eventually the army. They became the butt of jokes. There was a loss of face.

After the reactions to the signing ceremony and the Châteauguay riots, pressure on the Québec government to bring in the army increased. The 48-hour deadline had expired. The crisis committee of cabinet was divided. John Ciaccia was convinced that a military solution would sow the seeds of future violence with Aboriginal people. Premier Bourassa and Claude Ryan were cautious, and the rest of cabinet hawkish. In the end, Lieutenant-General Foster convinced the provincial government that a military assault would not resolve the crisis. Ciaccia describes him this way.

The general, even with an army under his command, was a peaceful man, looking for a peaceful solution. He would rather restrain the force that was available to him rather than unleash it, as he could have, against the recalcitrant Warriors who were bottling up an entire region. I remember after a particularly difficult meeting when he resisted the demands of the hardliners to take more forceful measures, calling me the next morning to thank me for having supported his position.¹⁵⁴

In this approach, Foster had the support of Prime Minister Brian Mulroney who did not want to be remembered historically as "the butcher of Oka."¹⁵⁵

Though he did not plan a military assault, on August 13 Premier Bourassa asked the troops to move in closer. By August 16, they were in place. On August 17 Bourassa asked the army to take over from the SQ and on August 20 they took over the barricades on Mercier Bridge and in Oka. As members of the SQ left the barricades near *Kahnawà:ke* they exchanged taunts with the Mohawks.¹⁵⁶

The Canadian Army

When the army arrived at Mercier Bridge, they started unravelling razor wire. Lieutenant-Colonel Robin Gagnon walked into the no-man's land separating the two barricades and met and shook hands with some Warriors who walked in from the other side. This began respectful relations between the two groups at *Kahnawà:ke*-Châteauguay. Many of the Mohawk warriors were veterans of the American military and the Canadian army treated them as adversarial colleagues.

A "hotline" was established between the two groups and they kept each other informed of activities to avoid an outbreak of violence. The Mohawks of *Kahnawà:ke* had a clear command structure and were prepared to "deal with the army on a 'soldier to soldier' basis."¹⁵⁷

In contrast, no Mohawk people agreed to meet Colonel Pierre Daigle, commanding officer of the army contingent sent to *Kanehsatà:ke*. Instead, some community volunteers met with him. When the army rolled its razor wire much closer to Mohawk positions than the Mohawks felt tolerable, the Mohawks informed Prime Minister Mulroney and Premier Bourassa that they would not talk until they were assured that the army would not advance any further. Part of the reason they were so adamant was that they feared if the army came too close they would realize how few warriors were in the Pines.¹⁵⁸

The *Kanehsatà:ke* group was a distillation of the most "fervent of the Mohawk idealists and militants."¹⁵⁹ They were not going to give up until their sovereignty was recognized. They had no formal command structure and they were not inclined to co-operate with Lieutenant-Colonel Daigle.

On August 27, Bourassa asked the army to dismantle the barricades. This set in motion a new chain of events. In *Kanehsatà:ke* the people behind the barricades went on red alert. The next day civil protection authorities advised Oka residents to evacuate their homes while the Red Cross brought in stretchers and body bags.¹⁶⁰

In *Kahnawà:ke*, elderly people, women, and children were evacuated on August 28 by a 75-car convoy. As they left, demonstrators stoned the cars and the police made no attempt to restrain or arrest the stone throwers. The father of Joan Lacroix, a 76-year-old French Canadian, was hit on the chest by a rock the size of a football and 71-year-old Joe Armstrong died a week later of a heart attack.¹⁶¹

The mobs of Châteauguay and LaSalle also made life difficult for the international observers. On August 24, they attacked a car of international observers whom they saw as Mohawk sympathizers. They found other ways of blocking transportation and inspiring fear. Finn Lynghjem, a Norwegian judge, remarked, "The only persons who have treated me in a civilized way in this matter here in Canada are the Mohawks. The army and the police do nothing. It's very degrading...to us, and perhaps more degrading to the government who can't give us access."¹⁶² On August 27, Bourassa asked the observers to leave.

On August 28 two intense sets of negotiations were occurring in the Dorval Hilton. In one room a group of Mohawks from *Kanehsatà:ke* and *Kahnawà:ke*, including Grand Chief Joe Norton, met with John Ciaccia for a last ditch negotiation to end the crisis. The other negotiation involved military leaders and *Kahnawà:ke* warriors. Proposals from the first negotiation were taken to a crisis cabinet committee meeting that night. Ciaccia had only one supporter in the room, which had turned hawkish. The other negotiations ended with an unwritten gentleman's agreement that warriors and soldiers would dismantle the Mercier barricades together. This was done on August 29.

The Mohawk people and their allies at *Kanehsatà:ke* were disheartened watching the Mercier bridge barricades being dismantled. Many did not learn about the

deal until they saw it happening on television. Stonecarver, a pacifist until the July 11 raid, went to say his last goodbye to his mother. He was convinced he would die in the army raid.¹⁶³

During this time, there were reports of police detaining Mohawks from *Kanehsata:ke* and beating them to try to learn who had killed Corporal Lemay. On August 26, Angus Jacobs was taken to a barn, where he was choked and kicked by police. This is his account:

We stopped at a building in the woods that I think was their headquarters. They showed me a photo of a masked man in the pine woods holding a gun. I think it was taken on July 11. They said they knew it was me. I denied it. They called me a dirty Indian bastard. They put a shotgun in my ear and made me crawl on the floor and called me a dog and said that they were going to kill me like a dog if I didn't make a confession. For the next two-and-a-half hours they took turns beating me. They split up in teams of two or three. They took off their heavy shoes and put on sneakers so the marks wouldn't show as bad. They punched and kicked every part of my body.... One of them grabbed me by the balls and twisted and then I almost passed out.... My kidneys and stomach hurt real bad and my private parts were painful too. They kept saying I had to sign this confession they put in front of me. Finally I signed it just so they would stop. I didn't even look at what I signed.¹⁶⁴

Daniel Nicholas was taken to the detachment at St. Eustache where he was kicked and burned with a cigarette on the stomach. He was detained for several days so the swelling would go down before he appeared in court.¹⁶⁵

In the coming days the focus of action was to narrow considerably.

Confinement to the Treatment Centre

After the Mercier Bridge was re-opened, military forces around the *Kanehsata'kehró:non* began to tighten the boundaries. A group of women, Warriors, children, and journalists were confined to the Treatment Centre and the surrounding woods. Tensions increased. Two events stand out as symptoms and symbols of that tension: the face-to-face stare of Private Patrick Cloutier and Warrior Brad Larocque, code-named Freddy Krueger, and the beating of Randy Horne, code-named Spudwrench. In the last days of August there was a chain of violence that increased the internal tensions among the *Kanehsata'keró:non*.

Dr. Réjean and Andrea Mongeon, who had a farm and veterinary clinic near the Pines, had left their property in the hands of one of the Mohawks for a few days. They had, over the years, cultivated friendly relations with the *Kanehsata'keró:non*. When they returned on August 31, they found their house vandalized. They were furious. Mohawk ambulance driver Ronnie Bonspille offered to help them but they refused. It was believed that Lasagna, Noriega, and friends had vandalized because this gang also went into the food bank and

threatened *Kanehsata:ke* community members with their automatic weapons. They were afraid that Bonspille would "rat" on them. Francis and Cory Jacobs (his son) were on security patrol when the Lasagna gang searched for Bonspille. As the gang approached, Bonspille fled to the military position and Francis and Cory were badly beaten by Lasagna and company. Then the gang went to Ronnie Bonspille's house where they smashed two ambulances and the house windows. The gang was only disarmed the following day, in a move initiated by the women of *Kanehsata:ké* and some warriors, and held in a house. Lasagna escaped and went to the community centre, where he shouted, yelled, and pounded his baseball bat; the people listened, afraid he might pull out his pistol and start shooting.¹⁶⁶ From Lasagna's perspective, Francis Jacobs and Ronnie Bonspille were traitors "who gave his name and picture to the SQ after having left the Oka area to collaborate with the police."¹⁶⁷

On September 1, as the *Kanehsata'kehró:non* were dealing with the aftermath of the Lasagna episode, the army mobilized and moved forward in the early afternoon. They took over all the Pines north of highway 344 and encircled the Mohawks on the grounds of the Treatment Centre. As the army advanced, the Warriors offered resistance. One Warrior screamed and lunged at the soldiers but was restrained by a Mohawk woman. Mad Jap kept telling the Warriors to hold their fire. Micmac Tom Paul was angry and wanted to shoot; he was just waiting for the first shot. On the army side, Major Alain Tremblay, the officer in charge of the operation, yelled "*Restez calme!*" On both sides the adrenalin was flowing. Traditional native healers warned that their protective medicine would not work if the Mohawks fired a single shot. During this time of mounting tension the famous staredown between Brad Larocque and Patrick Cloutier occurred.

The army had been moving its barbed wire closer to the Treatment Centre and mutual exchanges of insults were common. In the midst of this, a Warrior thrust his face inches away from the soldier and yelled "Boo!" then called him a "Motherf---er." That image with those words was captured on film and videotape and was shown around the world. The soldier just stared impassively into the face of the warrior, showing no reaction. The soldier was Patrick Cloutier from Gaspé who had been called from vacation with his parents to join in the action at Oka. His previous experience included Red Guard sentry duty at the Citadel where he was accustomed to keeping a straight face when tourists (especially women) would try to disturb his stare. Before he left home, his mother pointed out that the Mohawks had a lot of good demands; she told him, "Patrick, you're going to Oka, you're going to do a job, but do it with love in your heart, not hate."¹⁶⁸ He later told his mother that at the time of the staring his heart was racing but he wasn't scared.

The warrior was Brad Larocque from Saskatchewan. He was an Ojibway from Poor Man's reserve north of Regina. As a toddler he had been taken from his family and adopted by white parents in Weyburn. As he reached adulthood, he rediscovered his Aboriginal past and met his biological siblings. He attended the Indian Federated College and became an activist working for Aboriginal rights through non-violent protests. Until the crisis he had not approved of warrior activity. After

the July 11 raid he was approached by the Canadian Federation of Students to travel to Ottawa to work with fifteen others on a position paper on the crisis. As part of the research they took a boat from Montreal to *Kahnawà:ke* where he witnessed the mob action of Châteauguay from the Mohawk side; all of a sudden the position paper seemed trivial.

When the call for reinforcements came from *Kanehsatà:ke*, he signed up. When he arrived by boat, he was given "camouflage gear, an AK-47 rifle, and a codename—Freddy Krueger. He had become a warrior."¹⁶⁹ All of a sudden, the peaceful protests out West seemed futile: now he was with people who were taking action. The staredown ended when two Mohawk women arrived at the front lines with pizza. When the crisis was over, Cloutier was promoted and Larocque quietly went back to university in Regina.

In the evening, the army captured the last bunker in the Pines. They allowed the warriors to remove their possessions, which they did in a wheelbarrow. By September 3, the Mohawks were limited to territory bounded by highway 344 to the north, the Lake of Two Mountains to the south, and gullies to the east and west of the Treatment Centre.¹⁷⁰

Meanwhile on September 3 in *Kahnawà:ke*, a number of warriors regained control of Mercier Bridge, which was being repaired. The army moved in to recapture the bridge. The warriors went with their weapons to the Longhouse. Because an army helicopter had observed their route, a raid on the Longhouse resulted, with physical fighting between troops and Mohawk women who were protecting what to them was a sacred space.¹⁷¹

At the Treatment Centre, psychological warfare became the order of the day. The army shone bright lights on the Mohawk position. Mohawks answered with mirrors from the treatment centre, reflecting the glare to the soldiers. Flares and low-flying aircraft intensified the pressure. Faced with the pressure and with a determination to fire if there was an attack, more than half of the Warriors made their wills and burial arrangements.¹⁷² By September 6, verbal abuse between Mohawks and soldiers intensified and eventually they threw stones at one another. The next day, all younger Warriors were ordered away from the front lines.

Randy Horne, an older Warrior, was posted at night in a fox hole near the front line. At about 4:00 a.m. he woke up

to see a soldier stepping over him. When he brought his arms out of his sleeping bag to defend himself, he was immediately grabbed by two other soldiers on either side of the foxhole. He tried to call for help, but the soldier began beating him on the head with clubs. Spudwrench pulled out a small knife and slashed at the soldiers, injuring them slightly, but the soldiers kept clubbing him furiously. He put up his hand to protect himself, but they kept swinging away, inflicting deep gashes on his skull and face. He lost consciousness as the soldiers dragged him away.¹⁷³

Splinter, the warrior in the neighbouring bunker, heard the noise and shone a light on the soldiers, who ran away. He took Spudwrench to the Treatment Centre.

Because Spudwrench was in critical condition he was moved to Montreal General Hospital. Despite military promises that he would be returned to the Treatment Centre, he was arrested by the SQ on September 12.

By mid-September it started to get colder; pressure increased on those inside the Treatment Centre as cellular phones of journalists were made non-functional by a court order initiated by the SQ. Wilfried Telkamper, vice-president of the European parliament, wrote to Prime Minister Mulroney protesting cutting off the treatment centre phone line.¹⁷⁴ Joe Deom "said the army had refused to allow in blankets and heavy clothing, despite temperatures that were to dip to near zero overnight.... [He] said the army was using the cold as a weapon."¹⁷⁵

On September 17, the Bear Island Chief was reported saying, "Many native groups across the country will be taking action as a result of the Oka situation,"¹⁷⁶ and Cree Chief Bill Diamond claimed that young people advocated taking arms but have been looking for leadership to take the initiative. He went on to say that the "Mohawk Warriors have proved that leadership and the young people are really looking up to them. It's like hero worship."¹⁷⁷

In *Kahnawà:ke* there was mob action against soldiers who were conducting raids to search for weapons. On September 18, they searched Tekakwitha Island and one soldier was dragged into the crowd, punched, kicked, and choked with a binocular strap. Another soldier almost had an ear ripped off.¹⁷⁸ Twenty soldiers were injured (two with concussions) and seventy-five Mohawks needed medical attention. Among them was fifteen-year-old Kelly Ann Meloche, who claimed that they would never forgive or forget; she thanked the army "for making us stronger, for making us unite stronger."¹⁷⁹

On September 16, there were negotiations in Toronto between members of the Iroquois confederacy and John Ciacchia, who had done what he could to find a peaceful end. The Government of Québec refused to accept terms Ciacchia had negotiated and the initiative only deepened a rift between the Warriors and members of the Confederacy.

On September 19, the Canadian Police Association placed an ad in eighteen papers across the country associating the actions of the Warriors with terrorism. In the ad they stated that during the July 11 raid, the "Sûreté never returned any gunfire!!!"¹⁸⁰ a statement disputed by media reports.¹⁸¹ *The Globe and Mail* refused to print the ad, calling it "indefensible" and "provocative."¹⁸² The tensions between the SQ and Mohawks intensified as allegations of police torture were revealed. These tensions took on a French-English spin as the *Montreal Gazette* "ran a cartoon that portrayed a provincial police officer as a mutt in aviator glasses. On the mutt-officer's cap, the force's crest was rendered with the words 'Chien Chaud' [Hot Dog] below."¹⁸³ SQ Director-General Robert Lavigne accused the "the anglophone media of taking the natives' side in vengeance for the failure of the Meech Lake Accord."¹⁸⁴ This sense of a linguistic war came through in a piece by John Yorkton of the *Montreal Gazette* in response to an editorial by Alain Dubuc of *La Presse*:

"What is worrying is that the native issue is degenerating into a linguistic war," Dubuc said. "And that is not the fault of the Quebec media. Elsewhere in Canada, especially in Ontario, there is a widespread movement in support of the Mohawks, without a basic distinction between the demand of the Mohawks and the warrior guerrillas."... Dubuc said the movement had reached a climax with the publication in the Toronto Globe and Mail of a full-page advertisement denouncing the government's use of force. It was signed by unions, Protestant churches, civil rights groups and many individuals. He mentioned writers Margaret Atwood and Pierre Berton.¹⁸⁵

Back at the Treatment Centre, accusations of provocation came from both sides. Both the military and Mohawks cited instances in which someone from the other side fired an unloaded weapon at the other side.¹⁸⁶

On September 23, Warrior Dennis "Psycho" Nicholas married Cathy Sky in a traditional Mohawk ceremony at the Treatment Centre that was led by faithkeepers Loran Thompson and Bruce Elijah. In the following days, tensions among the people at the Treatment Center intensified. Cigarette rations were significantly reduced. The provincial government was not willing to consider appointing an independent prosecutor, so there seemed no hope of successful negotiations to disengage. Most of the people agreed to disengage within 48 hours, but a few like Lasagna and Noriega wanted to hold out to the end. Stonecarver observed, "We're beginning to eat ourselves. It seems like we're turning against ourselves now. It's like an animal that's beginning to gnaw on its own stomach because it's so hungry."¹⁸⁷ The end of the crisis was approaching.

The End of the Crisis

September 26 was the day of decision. A message was sent through a secret communications system, using the local radio station, from the negotiating team in Pointe Claire congratulating the Warriors for holding on and suggesting they had accomplished as much as they could. Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Mulroney had promised a new Aboriginal agenda in the House of Commons. They had achieved the goal of hanging on until parliament resumed. In separate clan meetings lasting until about 3:30 p.m. consensus to leave the Treatment Centre was achieved.

A bonfire was set outside the Treatment Center where any incriminating evidence and weapons were burned. The *Kanehsata'kehró:non* had decided to walk home. They would not surrender or give up. By 5:52 p.m. everyone was in camouflage gear and they had a final tobacco-burning ceremony that included Lasagna, the last to decide to leave with the group.

At 6:50 p.m., they began marching toward the front line. They put stretchers over the razor wire and scrambled across; then continued along highway 344 toward Oka. The soldiers were caught by surprise. They ordered the Mohawks to stop but the orders were ignored. The first five Mohawks (Loran Thompson, Vicky

Diabo with her infant daughter, Noriega, and Cathy Sky) walked through the military lines into the town where they were surrounded by supporters.

At the top of the hill, soldiers struggled with the Mohawks, some wrestling and scrapping. Some of the Mohawks were clubbed with rifle butts. Fourteen-year-old Waneek Horn-Miller was stabbed in the chest by a bayonet. By 7:10 p.m., the soldiers had the group corralled into a small section and handcuffed the Warriors. At 7:50 they were loaded into buses and driven away. Within two hours Lasagna was being interrogated and beaten by police at Parthenais detention centre.¹⁸⁸

Aftermath

Roughly a month after the crisis ended, a seminar to promote healing at Oka was held. Robert "Mad Jap" Skidder told the group that the resistance was worth it because "it has led to new unity among natives. I am proud to be a part of this history."¹⁸⁹ At the same meeting, Tona Maon of the national Canadian Alliance in Solidarity with Native Peoples, said: "There needs to be a braiding of hair of the nations to bring them together in one spirit, one body, one mind."¹⁹⁰ The issue of unity was also a theme as Ron "Lasagna" Cross reflected on events:

But when the people do come together, like in 1990 with all the trouble we had, no matter what you were—a Catholic or a Protestant or from one of the two Longhouses or a Band Councillor—everybody came together as one to defend the Territory and the people. I mean, I was right next to a guy who was Band Councillor and the guy on the other side of me was a priest and we all worked together to defend the Territory, thinking as one. That's why we were so strong in 1990. The governments made a mistake by doing what they did because when all the people come together as one, that's the strongest you can make the Indian people.¹⁹¹

Cross attributed the feeling of unity to the religious ceremonies.

The ceremonies that our people did at that time to help us get out of that situation were very powerful. We were protected very well because everybody was together as one mind: There was no bickering amongst each other, there was no hatred, there was no anger it was all together as one, as brother and sister. So it made us very strong in 1990. Spiritually, the odds were totally against Canada and any forces that came against us. It's like getting a religion you believe in a hundred per cent: You have faith in it; it's there for you when you need it, as long as you don't abuse it. That was the spiritual situation in 1990.¹⁹²

The unity was a dynamic unity since, as has been noted, there were conflicts among the *Kanehsata'kehró:non* over strategy, tactics, and feelings of betrayal. Although the traditional divisions were overcome, "once 1990 was over and things started to get back to normal, the factions came back into place, and people started

pointing fingers at each other and blaming each other, so it pulled our people apart again."¹⁹³

Well after the crisis was over, Hélène Sévigny, a Québécoise journalist, decided to write a book on Ronald Cross, code-named Lasagna. In it she describes her initial fears at being in a room alone with this notorious "terrorist." While the book is a story of his life, it is also a story of Sévigny's change in consciousness and awareness. Another level of insight comes from *Lasagna*, the book. In the English-language edition, Sévigny talks about the reaction to her original French-language edition. On live radio, Gilles Proulx screamed that she went to bed with terrorists and read a letter saying she was a prostitute to Warriors. Though the author of several other books, she sensed a kind of ostracism by her peers after the publication of *Lasagna*:

Despite the strident opposition to the book from some sectors of the media, what surprised me most is the position of silent "neutrality" that many of my fellow journalists, colleagues and even my friends have adopted since I published this biography. I began to realize, over the past year, that the negative public reaction to this book in Québec had to be based on something more than a simple attempt by the francophone media to cover up its misrepresentation of the events at Oka in 1990. The larger dimension of my increasing alienation from my former colleagues in journalism, the legal community, the conference circuit and even my social circle, began to give me pause for considerable thought. I began to realize that the overwhelming majority of people who had criticized the book had not even bothered to read it. Indeed, the most common reaction from people I spoke to, both publicly and privately, as soon as they heard I had written a book like this, but before they had read it, was to accuse me of "being on the side of the Mohawks," of "justifying their violence" and of "having no sympathy for White Quebecers." No statement brings this into sharper focus than the first question I was asked by the journalist covering my launch of the book in Trois-Rivières: "Do you know that Quebecers see you as a traitor to your own race?"¹⁹⁴

Others besides Hélène Sévigny felt victimized in the wake of the 1990 crisis. Even before the crisis was over, André Picard quoted Alain Dubuc of *La Presse* as saying that anti-francophones were painting Quebec as "intolerant and repressive."¹⁹⁵ This sense of anglophones picking on Québec was developed in greater depth by Robin Philpot in *Oka: dernier alibi du Canada anglais* in which he comments on English press comparisons of Québec to the Mississippi oppression of Afro-Americans as well as many other allusions to the racism of Quebecers.¹⁹⁶ He argues that what is overlooked is the anti-Aboriginal racism throughout English Canada and the positive side of Québec-Native relations.

Meanwhile, as of the writing of this book, land claims and other issues involving the peoples of Oka/Kanehsatà:ke were still unresolved.

* * * * *

This analytic narrative of the Crisis of 1990 forms a foundation for an interpretation of the major and some of the minor conflicts that took place throughout, using the framework of mimetic structures of violence. By attending to the early history and the growth of ethnonationalism in this chapter, I laid a foundation for showing that mimetic phenomena may have a long and protracted development. Focusing on both the broad developments, as well as some of the interpersonal dynamics of the key players, provides opportunity to examine the interplay of mimetic and scapegoat phenomena on different scales. The allusion to what happened in newspapers articles and books published after the crisis shows the significance of interpretation of events and that even at that level of action there is opportunity for mimetic desire and scapegoating.

Chapter 11

Interpreting the Oka/Kanehsatà:ké Crisis

Waneskewin is a buffalo jump on the banks of the South Saskatchewan River just north of Saskatoon. For 6,000 years indigenous peoples used the jump to hunt the buffalo they needed for food, shelter, and clothing. Hunters dressed as buffalo—"fake buffalo"—would start a herd of buffalo moving toward the jump. When the buffalo were all headed in the right direction, other hunters would get behind them making a noise to frighten them. The buffalo would start running in the direction of the jump. Piles of rocks would funnel the herd toward a well-defined, abrupt steep hill leading down to the river. They would be running so fast and so close together that by the time the animals in front would see the cliff it would be impossible to stop the momentum built up behind them. They would tumble down the cliff only to be slaughtered by waiting hunters.

Waneskewin, from a buffalo's perspective, becomes a metaphor for a mimetic structure of violence. There is a movement in the direction of violence; events stir up emotions, such as fear, that intensify the phenomenon. At a certain point the structure takes on a life of its own with its own momentum, and it is virtually impossible to stop or turn things around. Furthermore, those who, like the "fake buffalo," were there to deceive may have set the action structure in motion. The remarkable thing about the Oka/Kanehsatà:ke Crisis is that the buffalo slowed down and turned around before falling over the cliff; the crisis ended without widespread destruction and death.

As I have talked about the crisis with people who were there and reflect on the data, I have the distinct impression that Canada came close to the kind of bloodbath that would have changed its history for the worse. For this reason, it is extremely important to understand how we got ourselves into this type of situation—to understand the intertwined mesh of deep-rooted conflicts involved there.

The crisis was a complex phenomenon with many dynamics and sub-dynamics. In the analysis that follows, I methodically enframe a number of relational systems and use the theories that give definition to mimetic structures of violence to discover the inner dynamics of the operative structures. The overall picture that emerges is one of many highly conflicted relational systems that are interconnected—what happens in one has an impact on the others. The interconnections are of three kinds: first, some of the same players participate in more than one relational system; second, there is a direct impact in that a decision made in one relational system has a direct bearing on the other—blocking the Mercier Bridge at Kahnawa:ke had a direct impact on Oka/Kanehsatà:ke; and, third, there is a

mimetic impact as structures are imitated from one relational system to another: for example, it became clear to First Nations across Canada that the structural components of what was happening at Oka/*Kanehsatà:ke* resembled structures of violence that they had experienced. They responded by imposing blockades and threatening to blow up strategic targets, mimetically joining in solidarity with their Aboriginal sisters and brothers.

Referring back to Ken Wilber's quadrants as depicted in Chapter 9, there is a need to understand observable external dynamics as well as internal dynamics. In Chapters 2 to 8, I developed a number of theoretical perspectives that I argued would help us understand the internal emotions, drives and motivators within people participating in mimetic structures of violence. In Chapter 10, I presented an analytical narrative that presented the external dynamics—what was presented is empirically verifiable in that the data can be traced to the sources. I am now going to take the interpretation to another level—one that looks at internal structures. Based on the evidence of what happened and on statements of what people said at the time, we will examine the conflict using the theoretical constructs we have developed in Chapters 2 to 8.

The first level of verification comes from the readers: Do you think you might have felt and acted as the protagonists did if you had been in their situation, based on the theories and context presented? The second level of verification will come when people caught up in real conflicts say, "The theories of deep-rooted conflict and mimetic structures of violence help me understand why I feel like I do, why I am drawn to violence, and what is going on around me." The third level of verification will come when people use this awareness to respond to conflict in new ways, based on the theories presented, with good results.

This chapter is not simply about the Crisis of 1990; it is about mimetic structures of violence around the world. However, dealing with a specific conflict helps us see the theory in action as opposed to speaking in the abstract. The analysis will deal mainly with what happens within groups of people; this is, of course, closely related to what goes on within individuals. The spirit of the inquiry is not one of judgment, but about self-understanding—one's self and another's.

To begin, I will briefly review Chapters 2 to 8 so that there is clarity about the theoretical concepts used for the interpretation. I will then interpret thirteen different relational systems evident during the conflict using the components of mimetic structures of violence. Seven of these will be inter-group relational systems and six will be intragroup. Looking at these component parts will enable us to make some observations about the conflict as a whole. I will then provide a second narrative, much more condensed than the first, that will tell what happened during the crisis using the language and concepts of deep-rooted conflict. Note that by doing this I am integrating an atemporal analysis—looking at the relational systems apart from time—with an interpretation that emphasizes change through time—as I present a second narrative.

Mimetic structures of violence have a number of component parts that I will review in a schematic, condensed, and un-nuanced way. Invariably, there is a threat

to identity need satisfiers of meaning, connectedness, action, security, recognition, and selfness as having particular integrated qualities of being. This threat produces an emotional response with some combination of anger, fear, sadness, depression, and shame. If the threat is powerful or prolonged enough, it produces trauma and fear and the desire for security takes over the core of one's being. In time, if there is not sufficient healing, the trauma leads to a defensive mimetic structure of entrenchment in which identity needs are defined in terms of security. Hence, meaning systems are expressed in terms of narrowly defined beliefs, people are divided into friends and enemies, and action is defined in terms of security.

The aggressive side of a mimetic structure of violence is shown when people develop violent satisfiers for their identity needs—their beings are oriented toward violence. Mimetic theory is used in tandem with human needs theories. As René Girard developed it, mimetic desire is an imitation of the desires of another for an object.

Mimetic desire can lead to mimetic rivalry, in which two parties each desire what the other has or desires. Mimetic rivalry can intensify to the point that the parties become mirror images of one another. Eventually, one's "selfness" is defined mimetically. The link with human needs theory is that the satisfiers to identity needs are developed along the lines of mimetic desire and rivalry. In other words, identity is always worked out in relation to one's Other. Mimetic conflicts can generate crises that lead to scapegoating in which the violence of a community is projected onto a scapegoat. There is temporary unity as people unite around the same "enemy."

The dynamics of mimetic rivalries and the particular satisfiers to identity needs that result can develop into hegemonic structures in which certain groups emerge as systematically dominating other groups. In a stable hegemonic structure, mimetic rivalries take place between people at the top and between people at the bottom. When people at the bottom start to change these structures, conflictual rivalries break out between the people at the top and those at the bottom. All of these dynamics may involve people identified with ethnonationalist groups that combine perceived common ancestry, ethnicity, religion, land, and politics in the definition of identity groups. They develop an ethno-identity with stories of chosen traumas and chosen glories that are ever present through collapsed time.

Mimetic structures of violence can be thought of as an ontological rift—an dehumanizing chasm of separation—between Self and Other. One such rift is based on gender in which there are hegemonic structures, mimetic rivalries, and the framing of identity need satisfiers so that women can become sex objects for men and violent men may become hero-power-objects to be manipulated by women. Violence may be intensified through bystander compliance or encouragement, rhetoric, victimization of youth, narcissistic wounding and loss of face. These aspects of mimetic structures of violence may be present in differing degrees in various conflict situations.

Mimetic Structures of Violence in Specific Relational Systems

I will begin by interpreting the following inter-group relational systems that I have enframed.

1. *Kanehsata'kehró:non* and the Oka Council
2. Warriors and the SQ
3. *Kahnawà:ke* and Châteauguay
4. *Kanien'kehà:ka* (Mohawks) and *Québécois*
5. First Nations and the Government of Canada
6. Warriors and the Army
7. French and English.

Second will be an interpretation of intragroup conflicts within six different groups involved in the crisis; each makes up its own relational system:

1. *Kanehsata'kehró:non* (people of *Kanehsatà:ke*)
2. The Municipality of Oka
3. *Kanien'kehà:ka* (Mohawks)
4. The First Nations
5. The South Shore Residents
6. The Province of Québec.

Kanehsata'kehró:non and the Oka Council

I use mimetic, hegemonic, ethnonational, and identity needs theories to analyze the mimetic structure of violence that gripped this relational system. In the pre-crisis stage, the land called the Pines was the object of mimetic desire. Legally, the land belonged to developers in Europe who planned to sell enough of it so the city could build a golf course. The Pines were *de facto* in the hands of the Mohawks who used the Commons for their public events and solitary retreats. Members of the golf course desired the Pines for their expansion, mimicking other golf courses with eighteen holes and other housing developments based on proximity to a golf course. As they showed their desire for the Pines a series of feedback loops strengthened the desire of both groups for control over the Pines. With the golf course expansion plans, the Mohawks valued the Pines even more. As they protested the golf course expansion, the resolve of the golfers to acquire the Pines, with the support of the Mayor, increased.

This set of reciprocal actions to gain hegemony over the Pines developed into a mimetic rivalry and eventually into mimetic doubling. The Mohawks in the Pines were prepared to put their lives on the line to protect the land and Mayor Ouellette was prepared to risk loss of life to acquire the Pines. He even took action against the wishes of Québec Minister John Ciaccia. After the raid, he had to leave home because of a death threat; yet he still defended his action.

When it became clear that the legal system would allow the development, the *Kanehsata'kehró:non* decided to physically occupy the Pines. They became an obstacle to the golfers who asked the courts for an injunction. When that did not secure the land the Mayor asked the police to forcibly take the land. In their

decision to try to settle the issue *physically*, they became doubles of the Mohawks who had previously determined that they would *physically* stand in the way of development of the Pines. The golfers used the SQ to help them, just as the Mohawks used additional warrior forces from outside their community.

The Pines became a satisfier of a number of needs related to the identity of both groups. The needs for meaning and recognition included the rule of law, history, land rights, and values, and needs for connectedness involved community viability. The need for action included a vision for the future on which they wished to act and in relation to the Pines. Finally, control of the Pines had implications for the need for security. Let's look at each of these.

The first satisfier of the identity needs for *meaning* and *recognition* was the rule of law; there was mimetic doubling involving foundational principles of law. Mohawks agreed that the government had done things "by the book" but immediately stated it was a bad book. James O'Reilly, a lawyer who had represented native people but was not a part of the *Oka/Kanehsatà:ke* crisis, likewise commented that the law taken as a precedent was "bad law."¹ (See John Ciaccia's letter referred to in Chapter 10.) For the *Kanehsata'kehró:non* to accept the legitimacy of the legal and justice framework within Canada meant to accept a system in which all the cards were stacked against them. (See Chapter 8.)

The political and legal systems they faced constituted a hegemonic structure in which the Québec and Canadian governments dominated: that's why a golf course was there in the first place. Now the *Kanehsata'kehró:non* wanted out of the control structure and were prepared to stand their ground against the powers that be. Hence, there was a mimetic rivalry over the legitimacy of the whole legal framework for land ownership. The Mohawks went back to the Two-Row Wampum treaty and the concept of inherent indigenous land rights. On the other side, the various levels of government respected a history of legal decisions that granted the land to the Sulpicians to sell or transfer as they wished. Lacking agreement on a legal and justice framework within which disputes could be settled in a fair way parties resorted to a raw show of force.

Second, in relation to *meaning*, there was a rivalry over interpretations of history. From the Mohawk perspective, the land had belonged to their ancestors for hundreds of years (one element of ethnonationalism); their ancestors were the first people to inhabit it. Later, from their perspective, the king of France had allotted it to the Sulpicians to hold in trust for them. They did not respect the right of the king of France to the land, since it was already the focus of their activity. They did not believe that land could be owned; rather, they were owned by the land. Through the years, as they tried to use the land for their own sustenance, they were limited by the Sulpicians and by various forms of government. They, in turn, tried to block encroachments on the land by such things as railroads.

From the point of view of Euro-Canadians living in Oka, the history of Oka began with the movement of the Sulpicians and a group of Aboriginal people, mainly Mohawks, from Sault-aux-Recollets to the Lake of Two Mountains in 1721. Their ancestors were allotted land by the Sulpicians, the seigneurial custodi-

ans of the land (note a parallel element of ethnonationalism). When the seigneurial system was abolished in the 1850s, their ancestors gained clear title to the land according to laws in place at the time. They believed that the land was theirs to do with as they liked, as long as it was within the law as set out by the different levels of government.

Third, related to *recognition*, the dispute over the Pines came at the end of two centuries of struggle over control of the land. The Mohawks lost as the Sulpicians gained the support, first of the government of France and then of Britain. In the late 1800s there had been a campaign to get the Mohawks to relocate—that would have removed any future Indian claim to the land. Their tenacity kept alive a hope that one day their land rights would be recognized. For the Pines to be developed would have meant one more irreversible step in extinguishing Mohawk land claims in the area.

A fourth layer of *meaning* concerned a conflict of primary values. For the *Kanehsata'keró:non*, the land had value in its pristine condition. It offered peaceful solace to people who wandered among the trees. It meant that a portion of Mother Earth lay relatively unmolested; it provided a quiet burial place for ancestors. In addition, their forebears had planted the trees to avoid erosion. For the Mayor and his community, the land only had value if it was developed. It could generate revenue for the municipal council and an increase in tourism could bring in additional spin-off businesses. For them, the value of the land was its capacity to generate economic activity. For both groups it was a venue for sports: lacrosse and golf.

Fifth, the Pines played a role in the growth, sustenance, and viability of each community with the potential to contribute to the *security* and *connectedness* of each. Since the *Kanehsata'kehró:non* did not have a reserve *per se*, every bit of land contributed to a sense of place. The Pines was a central meeting place for special events. Their lacrosse box was there. The area was across the highway from the Treatment Centre. Because the community was spread out checkerboard style, a central common space was important to preserve a sense of peoplehood and a variety of institutions, and to sustain the culture. Besides, it represented a primary value in and of itself—it was a sacred space in the same way as a church, synagogue, or mosque are for others.

For the golf club members, expanding into the Pines made their sport more viable. A number of people had built homes near the golf club. With the planned development they would have new neighbours and the golfing community would be strengthened. These people had objected to the Native Treatment Centre since they thought it would reduce property values and cause problems. The golf course project would move the Mohawk presence farther from them and the expanded golf course would increase property values. The Pines represented the entrenchment and expansion of an institution that would be a focal point for a particular community.

Sixth, each group felt powerless to *act* in the face of the other. The Mohawks felt powerless to assert their land rights to the government and judicial institutions

that were foreign to them. The municipality of Oka felt powerless to carry out its decisions on land that they believed belonged to them. They wished to develop the land but the Mohawk occupation prevented them from doing so.

Seventh, both groups had a concern for *security*. The Mohawks in the Pines on a 24-hour basis were concerned about personal safety, particularly after the July 11 raid and subsequent apprehension of Mohawks by police. Individuals in the municipality had a sense that the safety of anyone who started cutting down trees for the golf course was questionable. In this context of intense rivalry, people on both sides were threatened with death or violence. Over the longer term, gaining control of the Pines could make the winning group feel more secure.

Each of these layers of need satisfiers functioned as a feedback loop, reinforcing the desire of each group for the Pines. In true mimetic fashion they became doubles of one another in their resolve to gain or keep control of the land. In the end, the rivalry for the land and what it represented evolved to the point where the identity of both groups, their sense of being, was wrapped up in the rivalry over the Pines.

In *Kanehsatà:ke* there was a nascent traditional longhouse community made up of a minority of the community. These people had begun to reclaim their language, culture, and sense of being Mohawk in a long unbroken line of descent. For these people their very sense of being Mohawk was at stake in the preservation of the Pines.

For the Mayor and the investor-developers involved in the golf course endeavour, the situation revolved around what for them was a primary preoccupation and dream. The more the Mohawks became an obstacle for their plans, the more they wanted that golf course. It appears to have become an obsession, so much so that the Mayor made a request to the province to have the SQ enforce the court order.

It becomes clear that mimetic desire led to a mimetic rivalry and a mimetic doubling. Both sides became mirror images of one another in the intensity of feeling they had about the other. In this highly charged environment, when violence was introduced, the tensions reached a new level and the groups played a scapegoat role for one another. The *Kanehsata'kehró:non*, previously divided, became more united than ever in their support of the occupation of the Pines. Other mayors united in solidarity around the Mayor of Oka. The part of the Oka community supporting the expansion was united and eventually passionate about a position that precluded ever giving up the Pines. So strong was their feeling that only the threat of expropriation convinced them to sell the land to the federal government. Some scapegoat effects in this frame were overshadowed by other powerful mimetic and scapegoat structures, such as those between the Mohawks and SQ, the next enfaming.

Warriors and the SQ

With the attack on the Pines, the mimetic rivalry between the Mohawk warriors and the SQ became more acute. There had been bad blood between the two through a series of events over the previous decades. After the attack, each group now hated

the other with a greater passion. Mohawks hated the SQ for the harassment, the beatings, and the raid on the Pines. The SQ hated the Mohawks for showing them up and for, as the police believed, killing one of their own.

Just before the SQ raid, John Cree had pointed out the mimetic relationship when he said "Whatever the police do, we will match." After the July 11 raid, when the Mohawks barricaded Highway 344, the police set up their own barricades opposite the Mohawk barricades.

After the SQ raid on July 11, the six police vehicles left behind were destroyed as the people "united in an orgy of destruction, a collective venting of anger." There clearly was a scapegoat effect involving mob action—contagious collective violence—that came at a time of crisis. The SQ became symbolic victims; the police cruisers represented the police; and damage to them was symbolic and materially hurt the SQ. It was one unique point of vulnerability on the part of the police since they had left some of the vehicles when they fled after Corporal Lemay had been killed.

On July 11, the perceived stakes of the conflict and the types of force and violence both escalated. The SQ started with a show of force, hoping to intimidate the Mohawks into surrendering the land. The two sides were so much doubles of one another that they used the same ammunition making it impossible to determine whether Corporal Lemay was killed by a police or Mohawk bullet. Immediately after the shooting, the SQ moved a thousand officers to Oka; numerous Aboriginal people from across the country came to help the *Kanehsata'kehró:non*. The *Kahnawà:ke* blockage of the Mercier Bridge was a show of force to intimidate the government-sponsored forces. Furthermore, the Mohawks tricked the outside world into thinking that they had more warriors in the Pines and more high-powered weaponry than was, in fact, the case. The preoccupation of warriors and SQ with one another, even after the army moved in, brought the rivalry to the point of mimetic doubling. Within this concept of inter-group mimetic doubling, each group played a scapegoat role for the other. This was evident in the anger and hatred expressed toward the other, the relative unity within the groups, and the examples of selective scapegoating when individual Mohawks fell into the hands of the police.

Three scapegoats for the SQ were Angus Jacobs, Daniel Nicholas, and Ron Cross, code-named Lasagna. Remember that on August 26, Angus Jacobs was taken to a barn where police choked and kicked him. He said that he was called a "dirty Indian bastard," beaten, and kicked with sneakers. Daniel Nicholas was kicked and burned on the stomach with a cigarette at the detachment at St. Eustache. The name-calling, degrading behaviour, and beating resembled scapegoat actions.

Jacobs bore all the marks of the scapegoat; as a Mohawk he was different and as a perceived warrior even more different. When apprehended he was vulnerable; as a warrior he was strong. The SQ had a sense of crisis over having lost a member and having lost face. His identification with the Mohawks clearly made him illegitimate in the eyes of the police. The scapegoat action was justified on the grounds

that it was an interrogation meant to elicit a confession. The same points could be made regarding Daniel Nicholas and, with even greater emphasis, Lasagna.

Lasagna epitomized for them what it meant to be a warrior and he had been particularly defiant. When he was captured at the end of the crisis, he had the marks of a scapegoat victim: he was powerful yet vulnerable; he was clearly illegitimate; his status as an armed person, like the police, called essential differences into question; and he appeared during a crisis. These intensified the police feeling that they had lost face in this situation. Through his notoriety, press exposure, taunts, and threats he had become the top SQ prey. When he walked out of the Treatment Centre he was immediately turned over to the SQ, unlike the others who were taken to a military base.

Kahnawà:ke and Châteauguay

The Mercier Bridge was closed within hours of the raid on the Pines. The Bridge became the object of mimetic desire for Mohawks and citizens of Châteauguay. The mimetic dimension is not immediately apparent since it could be argued that the people of the south shore simply desired the use of the bridge. Evidence of a mimetic desire comes from the rhetoric and action that took place. If the bridge had been closed for renovation or due to a natural disaster, there would not have been mob action or calls for the military. The fact that the *Mohawks* had control of the bridge is what prompted such deep reactions. The Mohawks were a thorn in the side of the people living on the south shore. Why did they have to be different (distinct)? Why couldn't they obey Québec and Canadian laws like everyone else? Why couldn't they respect public ownership of something like the bridge, which was built for the common good? Why did they have to be that way?

The intense reaction to anyone appearing native, the harassment of stores that did business with the Mohawks, the burning of Mohawks in effigy, the passion to stop food shipments—all showed almost an obsessive rage towards the Mohawks. The politicians and spokespersons called for draconian measures to open the bridge. They wanted the army called in. They wanted governments to act. They wanted the government to take control of the bridge.

The passion of citizens was so strong that they burned the premier in effigy for his inaction. Clearly, the traffic disruption created a sense of crisis and intensified the feeling. That is the point of Girardian theory. In a crisis, when things are not working well, contagious mimesis is shown in its full force. There was violence in the air among the mobs. The impact on government consciousness was so great that it took the military leaders to talk the politicians out of forceful action.

Within this crisis context, there were many examples of scapegoating. It was almost like lightning looking for a lightning rod. The violence had to find a place to go. At one point, the police even had to lock themselves inside the police station. At another point, journalists were subject to a menacing mob. At yet another, it was a woman wearing a Canadian flag. The burning of effigies was structured along scapegoat lines. When elderly Mohawks were driven out of *Kahnawà:ke* they were stoned. In the mob at each point was a sense of unity that combined solidarity

around concern for the bridge with *Québécois* nationalist expressions. At various points they shouted: "*Qué-bec, Qué-bec.*" All of these exemplify the various stereotypes and characteristics of scapegoating.

The characteristics of scapegoats are that they are different, powerful, vulnerable, and illegitimate. All of the scapegoats listed above were subject to acts of violence.

In addition, the police were available as scapegoats because they were close at hand. They challenged the distinctions of being *Québécois* and at the same time different because of their uniforms. The mob viewed them as illegitimate because they were preventing the mob action, protecting the Mohawks, and thwarting the plan to block the St. Lawrence Seaway. The mob thought of itself as different from the "criminal" Mohawks; for the police to intervene against them made the police "criminal" like the Mohawks, who were supposed to be different. The police were vulnerable because of their smaller numbers, yet they had sufficient power to make them worthy scapegoats.

The woman who wore a Canadian flag was, likewise, a stereotypic scapegoat. Her symbol was powerful—it was Canada, which had just rejected Québec through the failure of the Meech Lake Accord. She was obviously vulnerable. Even the police saw intuitively that she was a natural scapegoat and warned her to leave; they in effect blamed her for the problem. Her *Canadian* identification clearly made her illegitimate; the fact that she was a neighbour and was "like them" in one way but different in another way challenged distinctions. The Mohawks in the cars likewise bore the marks of the scapegoat. They were from the hated group, making them illegitimate. The fact that they were Mohawks made them powerful symbols. Being in cars at close range made them vulnerable. At the same time, driving in cars and looking much like the mob called into question the sense of difference; one of the elderly people hurt by a rock was actually French Canadian.

While much of the violence projected by the mobs onto the scapegoats was immediately inspired by frustration over the bridge, there was clearly more to it than that. Meech Lake had been defeated by Elijah Harper, a First Nations person. First Nations people were blockading the bridge. Canada had rejected Québec. Québec had to take control of its own destiny and it now appeared that Québec could not even control of its own bridge. The incident symbolized something bigger.

The Mohawks of *Kahnawà:ke* were similarly motivated through the whole crisis. One can perceive signs of mimetic desire and scapegoating on their part. What helped to fuel their passion to take the bridge was the fact that so much of their meagre land had been confiscated for the sake of Euro-Canadians. Most prominent among the examples was shoreline land taken for the St. Lawrence Seaway. It did not end there. The land to build the Mercier Bridge in the first place had been taken from them and the bridge went right through their reserve. They had been so permanently inconvenienced by control of their land for the benefit of the people on the south shore that it did not seem so consequential to them that people on the south shore were inconvenienced for a few months. Shutting down the

bridge was a scapegoat action for the Mohawks. At first there was disagreement but eventually the whole community united around the occupation of the bridge and the forces wanting the bridge to be opened became the scapegoats. What generated the passion was a remembrance of past injustices. The Pines symbolized another land grab by Euro-Canadian governments that they were determined to stop.

Kanien'kehà:ka (Mohawks) and *Québécois*

During the three decades before the crisis, ethnonationalism increased among the *Québécois* and the Mohawks. This manifested itself in a racial awareness and a drive for political control of their own territory and institutions. First, in both cases, there was a sense of racial distinctiveness. The *Québécois* had a concept of *pure laine*, referring to those who were fully *Québécois* in an ethnocultural sense, and the Mohawks paid keen attention to defining who was a member of their community, for a time including a criterion of blood quantum. Second, tensions between them occurred against a backdrop in which both Québec and Aboriginal people sought special status within the Canadian constitution. A mimetic rivalry over ethnonational discourse had gone on since the 1960s. Both Québec and the First Nations wanted to be recognized as "founding nations." Both used the language of sovereignty and wanted self-government. Aboriginal leaders gained an increased profile through a series of First Ministers' Conferences in the 1980s where they had a voice. These conferences did not produce the anticipated results for Aboriginal people, and, under the Meech Lake Accord, they were left out of constitutional reform. The Meech Lake Accord, however, had been very promising for Québec; included within it were the five key demands Premier Bourassa had made, including recognition as a distinct society.

The failure of the Meech Lake Accord created a sense of crisis in Québec. Québec felt once again "slapped in the face" and rejected. Scapegoating conditions were perfect. At the beginning of the crisis, there was every reason to make scapegoats of the Mohawks. They were different, yet they called into question the difference of the *Québécois* by arguing that they had the greater claim to sovereignty. They were perceived as powerful enough to arouse strong emotions, having been rivals since they had sided with the English in the 1700s. Now the mystique of heavily armed warriors made them seem more potent. They were illegitimate—defying Québec law, keeping the SQ out of *Kahnawà:ke*. They were Aboriginals, like Elijah Harper who had scuttled the Accord. Given their small numbers, they seemed vulnerable. Furthermore, in *Kanehsatà:ke* they were not respecting the rule of law and were accused of shooting a *Québécois* police officer. They were branded terrorists, and, in *Kahnawà:ke*, they had shut down a major bridge across the St. Lawrence River.

When the SQ invaded the Pines, the rivalry between *Kanehsatà:ke* and Oka rapidly became a rivalry between the Government of Québec and the Mohawks. The death of Corporal Lemay played a scapegoat function, even though many of the classic signs of scapegoating were not present. An actual victim served to polarize the two armed groups and, in the polarization, unify each group and

strengthen their resolve. At the time of Lemay's funeral, Mohawks flew their flag at half mast; they wished to honour the life of the one who had fallen. The SQ was united at the funeral.

While there was a common lament over this death, superimposed structures of differentiation and undifferentiation followed. The funeral served to cement in the minds of the SQ and many *Québécois* that the Mohawks were the enemy; they were held responsible for Lemay's death. Mohawks remained more determined than ever to protect their land rights and stand up for their claims to sovereignty. The sense of us versus them—putting people into categories—represented a post-scapegoat differentiation. The violence of differentiation became manifest as they intensified their feelings of the other as Other.

Superimposed on the structure of differentiation was a structure of undifferentiation, as the Mohawks and *Québécois* became doubles of one another in their determination to have their claims to sovereignty recognized. The Mohawks were both double and scapegoat, either oscillating between the two or playing both simultaneously. There were many expressions of mutual hate.

When violence was introduced, the mimetic show of force took on a life of its own as the conflict escalated exponentially. It is interesting that right after the raid of July 11, the nature of the conflict changed. The conflict was no longer just about the Pines; it was about First Nations' right to land everywhere in Canada, as evidenced by statements made by First Nations leaders. But it was also clear in what Québec politicians said, most markedly the mayors from the districts surrounding Oka. They recognized that 85 per cent of Québec was under dispute. The double contagion so soon after the attack was striking.

As soon as the Mercier Bridge was blocked, the circumstances were ripe for the Mohawks to become a collective scapegoat for the more nationalistic Quebecers. They bore all the marks of the scapegoat. There was a general sense of crisis after the failure of the Meech Lake Accord. This crisis was about difference, the distinctiveness of *Québécois* within Canada. Meech Lake's failure had prompted significant hatred toward Elijah Harper and ill will toward Aboriginal people. More acutely, there was a traffic crisis on the south shore. The mobs of Châteauguay acted vicariously for many of the people of Québec who were angry at both the English and Natives. So powerfully had the failure of Meech galvanized the *Québécois* that traditional rivals Bourassa and Parizeau were united in their resolve to strengthen the nationalist agenda in Québec.

There was a sense that the actions of the Mohawks were illegitimate. They were considered lawbreakers and accused of being terrorists. The sense of illegitimacy was heightened by allegations that many of the warriors were from the United States and that they had criminal records, both turning out to be, for the most part, untrue. They were powerful enough to be good scapegoat medicine to resolve a national crisis. The Mohawks were vulnerable. They were a tiny and different group. The Mohawks were Aboriginal people—First Nations. Furthermore, they were distinguished from other Québec Aboriginal groups by their sense of independence, their preference for the English, and their militancy and tenacity.

Kahnawà:ke was probably the only reserve in Canada into which Euro-Canadian police would not enter. It was easy to believe that they were "lawless savages."

Mohawks threatened the sense of difference by which the *Québécois* distinguished themselves from the rest of Canada. This sense of difference came from being one of two founding nations. That was called into question by Aboriginal people generally and the Mohawks most forcefully. The territorial integrity of the Province of Québec was called into question. The Mohawks were a distinct society with a claim to peoplehood and a right to self-determination.

Throughout the crisis the scapegoat phenomenon intensified. Broadcaster Gilles Proulx used his radio station to whip up fury against the Mohawks. The symbolism of a warrior in battle regalia signing the August 12 agreement with Tom Siddon and presenting mediator Alan Gold with a Warrior Society flag intensified the anger in the *Québécois* population and helped pressure Bourassa to call in the army. The deployment of the army made the situation graver. On August 28, as elderly people, women, and children were evacuated, the demonstrators stoning the cars, showed, at a primal level, what many thought ought to happen through a military assault on the barricades.

First Nations and the Government of Canada

As the crisis evolved, the primary relational system grew to include all of the First Nations of Canada, the Government of Canada, and, ultimately, the entire country. Within days of the July 11 raid, other First Nations in Québec and across Canada joined in acts of support and solidarity. This took place on an individual and official level—chiefs and vice-national provincial chiefs. The acts of solidarity included going to *Kanehsatà:ke* and *Kahnawà:ke* to help; raising money and food, and transporting these to the people behind barricades; making public statements of support; and mimetically setting up barricades on roads and threatening to blow up the infrastructure. These acts of solidarity sent a powerful message to the governments of Québec and Canada that if there were an all-out attack involving bloodshed the consequences would be enormous.

The federal government was at first very detached from the situation. It left all negotiations and strategizing to the Government of Québec. When it got involved, it showed a determination to close in on the Mohawks until they surrendered. Undoubtedly, the prime minister and many cabinet members were still reeling over the defeat of the Meech Lake Accord. When, in August, the government attention shifted from Québec to Ottawa, attitudes were very confrontational.

The people of Canada were horrified to have a military operation taking place on their soil. Many were unaware of what Aboriginal people had endured in Canada and the key First Nations spokespersons who appeared on the nightly news helped raise consciousness of this issue. This became evident in the Spicer Commission set up in January 1991; a trend was that Canadians were convinced that Aboriginal justice issues needed to be addressed.

Within this frame of reference, it is clear that there was mutual scapegoating and that the two sides became mimetic doubles of one another. We look first at

ways the government played a scapegoat for the First Nations and, second, the way in which Aboriginal people were the scapegoats of the government.

Key to a scapegoat effect is the sense of all united against one. In this case, all (or at least most) First Nations united in their opposition to the government action against *Kanehsatà:ke*. This was largely due to their recognition that the structure of government action in the case of *Kanehsatà:ke* was, in many ways, quite similar to historical and current actions taken against First Nations generally. The structural components of the action included land appropriation, breaches of treaty, using the law and legal systems to legitimize the taking of land, and exercising superior force. The end use of the appropriated land in *Kanehsatà:ke*, as in virtually every other case across the country, was to benefit Euro-Canadians. This structural resonance called for support and suggested that mimetic responses were in order, that is, imitating the resistance of the Mohawks.

The solidarity came from a kinship among the original inhabitants of North America. This feeling of kinship among peoples who often experience considerable internal conflict exemplified a scapegoat effect. The common enemy was the combined forces of the governments of Québec and Canada as represented by the SQ and the army. On July 17, at a Parliament Hill march, pro-Aboriginal speaker after speaker condemned Indian Affairs Minister Tom Siddon and Prime Minister Brian Mulroney for not intervening. A few days later, at a gathering of chiefs, a number of them blamed Québec Premier Bourassa and Mulroney's Conservative government with its "separatist buddies" for the crisis (note: Prime Minister Mulroney had recruited a number of Québec nationalists, including Lucien Bouchard, to be part of his government). Georges Erasmus stated that Canada's political leaders were the clearly defined enemy. Many First Nations threatened violence if the Mohawks were attacked.

The Government of Canada bore many of the marks of a scapegoat. From the perspective of the First Nations, the government was powerful, yet vulnerable (to blowing up or blocking infrastructure) and totally illegitimate. As a scapegoat, the government was potent medicine for unifying the First Nations. This unity occurred up the nesting chain—from Mohawks of *Kanehsatà:ke* and *Kahnawà:ke* to the wider Mohawk community to the Iroquois Confederacy and Québec Indians to First Peoples across Canada to American Aboriginal people. There was a paradox of difference from the perspective of the Aboriginal people. On the one hand they were considered citizens of Canada; this was their government that ran the Department of Indian Affairs and provided many social benefits. On the other hand, this was the government of the newcomers, the ones who had come and imposed their will on the Aboriginal people. In the end, the paradox became a heightened sense of alienation and differentiation from the Euro-Canadian-dominated government. Some of the rhetoric of Aboriginal people stated that their struggle was with the Government of Canada, not the people.

On the other side of the ledger, the Mohawks became the scapegoats for the government of Canada following the demise of the Meech Lake Accord. In this context, there was a crisis within the government. The Accord, which was to have

brought about national reconciliation, had blown up due to the stand taken by an Aboriginal member of the Manitoba legislature. Rather than reconciliation, the rift between Québec and the rest of Canada was greater than before and the Aboriginal agenda had been a key factor. The actions of the Mohawks were cast as being illegal, even terrorist, by both the prime minister and by the deputy minister of Indian Affairs; they were illegitimate. The Mohawks and Aboriginal people were powerful in that they could attack the infrastructure of Canada. They were clearly different from other Canadians in the demands they were making and the world view they espoused. Yet, there was a paradox in that they were also Canadian; in a sense, more Canadian than anyone else because of their historical ties to the land. And they were vulnerable to military force.

There was a sense that somehow the challenge to the authority of the government had to be suppressed. For a long time the minister of Indian Affairs refused to negotiate with the Mohawks. The refusal to negotiate with people with arms and the characterization of the Mohawks as criminals played a role in the scapegoat process. Yet the Aboriginal people were not entirely vulnerable; hence, the scapegoat process did not work out as it might have. What made them less vulnerable was the concern expressed by the international community, the threat to infrastructure posed by Aboriginal people across the country, media coverage, and growing public support of Aboriginal people. Even though there is evidence that the structure of scapegoating was present, it did not result in the kind of unity that might have occurred had there been an attack on "terrorist" Mohawks.

Reflecting on what happened, York and Pindera observed that Brian Mulroney's application of the Mohawk right to self-determination was inconsistent with standards he had applied to other similar situations in other countries:

While denying the Mohawks the right to self-determination, Mulroney has accepted the moral authority of other populations to chart their own destiny. For example, he has argued that the Baltic republics in the Soviet Union have the right to self-determination, and he has never questioned Québec's right to choose its own future. Constitutional experts have called attention to the strong parallels between the sovereignty claims of Québec and those of the Iroquois. It is ironic that Québec should be free to determine its own destiny, while Québec's aboriginal people—with a longer history of sovereignty—should be denied that same freedom.²

This observation corroborates the idea that the Mohawks were a scapegoat for the federal government in general and the prime minister in particular. The government had just made an offer of an Aboriginal royal commission and a promise of a faster track on land claims to Elijah Harper in June as a trade-off for his support of the Meech Lake Accord.

What upped the ante for the government was the loss of face Canada suffered internationally. Canada, the country that spoke up for human rights and sent peacekeepers to hot spots around the world, was shown to have the potential for both human rights abuses and lethal conflict. The government desperately wanted the situation settled. They realized that if the Mohawks were killed, there would be

massive uprisings by First Nations people across the country. They spent significant amounts of money to discredit the Mohawks.

In the final analysis, this scapegoating failed because the Mohawks were shown to have a legitimate historical grievance and the background of those involved was significantly less "criminal" than had been presented. In the end, few criminal charges stuck. After the crisis, the Canadian public had general sympathy for Aboriginal people and politicians were held in ill-repute.

Warriors and the Army

As soon as the Canadian Forces moved in, structures between the Government of Canada and the First Nations were established that were similar to those between the *Québécois* and the Mohawks. Again, the prime minister accused the Mohawks of illegal action, casting them as criminals.

Mimetic rivalry took different forms in each crisis location. In *Kahnawà:ke*, there was mutual respect between warriors and soldiers. Some of the warriors had seen combat experience in Viet Nam; others were veterans of the Canadian army. They knew military protocol and culture and the Canadian Army respected them as peers. This sense of doubling was expressed in the joint dismantling of the barriers: allowing both sides to be actors made it possible for both to save face. At *Oka/Kanehsatà:ke* the mutual mimesis took a different form. The two sides engaged in harassment, threats, cat-calls, and psychological warfare; the Canadian Army shone spotlights on the Mohawks who used mirrors to direct the light back at the soldiers.

Mimetic rivalry and doubling were shown in the famous staredown between a warrior and a soldier. Patrick Cloutier and Brad Larocque became representatives of their respective groups. Both were both roughly the same age. Both stood out as mavericks in their communities of origin. Both of them were totally committed to their groups. Both had a natural personal tendency to deal with issues peacefully. During the staredown they both held their ground unflinchingly. The one difference in their actions was that Larocque was verbal whereas Cloutier just stared ahead impassively. As they each held their ground, their faces inches apart, the tension rose, replicating a mimetic crisis. What broke the tension was the announcement that pizza had arrived.

Mimetic doubling took place on a wider scale when tensions escalated to the breaking point as the army tightened its noose around the Treatment Centre. Mohawk women and Mad Jap moved around warriors calming them down. On the army side, Major Tremblay yelled, "*Restez calme!*" Both sides had individuals who were tempted to shoot and others who realized that the conflict would become more serious if there was gunfire, which would have been returned with interest. Mimetic violence would have claimed many casualties and inflicted deeper emotional wounds.

The beating of Randy Horne showed scapegoat action. The beating was severe enough to question whether he would live. As in the cases where the SQ beat Jacobs, Nicholas, and Cross, the victim bore the marks of a scapegoat.

When the army arrived at *Kahnawà:ke* to check Tekawitha Island for weapons on September 18, the Mohawk mob attacked the soldiers as scapegoats. The army was powerful, yet vulnerable because of smaller numbers; it was clearly illegitimate in the eyes of the Mohawks. At the end, teenager Kelly Ann Meloche thanked the army for the sense of unity they had inspired. Her observation indicates that the mob action played a unifying role as scapegoating invariably does.

French and English

Near the end of the crisis, the *Québécois* became the scapegoats for the rest of Canada. Articles and columns appeared in the English press comparing Québec to Mississippi of the '60s. The allegations of racism in Québec and the groundswell of support for First Nations people across the country helped to isolate Québec even more from the rest of Canada. Anger and resentment felt toward Québec hardened many Canadians against any peaceful constitutional concessions.

This scapegoating stands at the end of a long history of rivalry between French and English in Canada—a rivalry thrown into relief through the prism of *Oka/Kanehsatà:ke*. The rivalry between French and English was for control of the land and institutions of Québec, both a part of Canada and the province of Québec. Power in the hands of the Government of Québec meant that French *Québécois* had greater control over their own territory and institutions. Powers exercised by the federal government could be controlled by the English majority. Hence, the rivalry over relative powers of the federal and provincial governments was a rivalry between French and English hegemony in the province.

The rivalry also translated into who controlled the different levels of government. The demise of the Meech Lake Accord brought the rivalry to a new intensity. The Mohawks were scapegoated by each level of government. For the two governments involved, the crisis brought collaboration: the RCMP worked with the SQ and the decision to bring in the military was a joint decision by both levels of government.

The reasons the scapegoating failed were, first, that the support of the rest of the First Nations made the Mohawks not totally *vulnerable*. Second, the growing recognition that land claims had an historical basis called into question allegations that the First Nations actions were *illegitimate*. Their position was vindicated further when the federal government bought their land. In their *difference* as First Nations and as an Aboriginal group vociferously claiming sovereignty, the Mohawks were not different enough to unite *Québécois* and other Canadians. In any case, the Mohawks as scapegoats failed to unite Canada, even though they served to unite Quebecers as a group and, to an extent, certain elements of other parts of Canada who tended to look disparagingly upon Aboriginal peoples.

The intensity of the crisis occasioned by the failure of Meech and the *Oka/Kanehsatà:ke* stand-off only temporarily distracted the historical rivalry—the crisis needed a scapegoat victim powerful enough to provide a unifying catharsis. Much of the energy within Québec was driven into a fierce ethnonationalism that eventually saw the *Parti Québécois* return to power and the formation of the *Bloc*

Québécois to bring an unambiguous pro-Québec voice into the House of Commons.

Just as the Oka/Kanehsatà:ke crisis became a pretext for some Canadians to make Québec a scapegoat for the problems facing Canadians, the rest of Canada became the scapegoat for the *Québécois*. It was the English who thwarted their plans. As the huge mimetic rivalry and scapegoat structures moved back into position after the 1990 crisis, the Mohawks with their claims and pains were forgotten.

Throughout the crisis, there were rivalries *within* the protagonist groups. These rivalries were affected by, and in turn had an effect on, the conflict as a whole. In many cases, these were hidden from members of other groups and from the public at large. The major protagonist group was the *Kanehsata'kehró:non*, since they were literally at the centre of the crisis and interacted directly with representatives of the other key groups. Other key groups included the Municipality of Oka, the Mohawks, the First Nations, the South Shore Residents, and the Province of Québec.

As we enframe each of these relational systems and note the intragroup dynamics, we note kaleidoscopic changes in structure; changes that occur more frequently because of the crisis. The intensity magnifies the various phenomena. With the complexity of identity bases, communities do not act unanimously, as is the case in classic scapegoating. At one point it was a subidentity group that acted unanimously—the case with the Longhouse traditionalists who initially led the occupation of the Pines. At other times, the logical enframing of a community changed so that a new group emerged that acted with unanimity—the case when the pro-golfing and pro-development groups joined surrounding mayors supporting the mayor and council of Oka.

Sometimes a person who is a part of one identity group, involved in one side of a conflict, goes through a personal transformation resulting in a feeling of solidarity with another group. An example is the south shore *Québécoise* who, after seeing a Mohawk woman denied food, joined with those who were trying to get food to *Kahnawà:ke*. At the beginning, her identity was with her fellow *Québécois(es)*, the frustrated commuters; later, perhaps because of her identity as a woman, it shifted to the food providers who showed solidarity with the Mohawks. This shows the constant changes in intragroup rivalries and scapegoating of groups in terms of their relevant subgroups and group identities.

In terms of the overall schema, we will now look at intragroup dynamics as giving definition to the relational systems within which mimetic phenomena are evident.

Kanehsata'kehró:non

Among the people of *Kanehsatà:ke* there were a series of rivalries before and during the crisis. These involved leadership, cliques, clans, and action groups.

Just before the occupation of the Pines there was a rivalry between Clarence Simon and George Martin. Simon had been Grand Chief until January 1990 when

clan mothers replaced him with Martin. Each had their own following within the community, resulting in a rivalry over the basic political organization. In addition, there were rivalries over leadership and political organization. The system of having clan mothers appoint the chief and band council combined the traditional role of clan mothers in selecting leaders with a set of powers defined by the Indian Act. The Longhouse wanted to ignore the Indian Act altogether, but the League for Democracy and the Group for Change argued for a return to band council elections.³

In early July, when Public Security Minister Sam Elkas threatened government action against those barricading in the Pines, the debate between those who wanted to comply and those who wanted to stay was intense. This revealed a rivalry within the Longhouse group of the *Kanehsata'kehró:non* over primary values and leadership: Was it more important to hold on to the land at all costs? or, was it more important to settle things non-violently and avoid loss of life at all cost? In the end, Allen Gabriel and his friends left the Pines. Ellen Gabriel and John Cree then took on key leadership roles.

Gender-based conflict was partly based on a desire to recover the traditional leadership role of Mohawk women as guardians of the land. We note that on the morning of July 11, the women were at the front lines, resolute in their determination to stay in the Pines. After the police arrived, some of the men urged them to leave but they remained part of the occupation throughout the crisis. They had a voice both in the negotiations and in interpreting the crisis to the outside world.

On August 4, another factious conflict was precipitated by the arrival of Ovide Mercredi of the Assembly of First Nations. Longhouse people thought the AFN was made up of government agents, since it recognized the Indian Act. There was also an accusation of cliquishness since the negotiating team appeared to favour particular clans. That changed at one point when Bourassa's 48-hour ultimatum united Mohawks against the government. Once again, it became a case of violence of undifferentiation as representatives of the different factions became rivals; they were brought together by a scapegoat effect with Bourassa and the government as the differentiated Other.

Another intragroup rivalry in the *Kanehsatà:ke* camp involved the lawyers who desired to be the primary advisers to the *Kanehsata'kehró:non*: Cohen and Kunstler were high profile lawyers from the United States. In the end Cohen's advice was taken more seriously and Kunstler left.

Finally, there was a rivalry between Ron Cross (Lasagna) and cohorts against Ronnie Bonspille and Francis and Cory Jacobs. Cross was convinced that Bonspille and Jacobs had told the police about his identity. This made them illegitimate to Cross and company, who beat Francis and Cory Jacobs as Ronny Bonspille got away. They also smashed Bonspille's ambulance; this gratuitous violence to get at Bonspille was further evidence of a scapegoat effect. In addition to being illegitimate, the Bonspille group was powerful enough so that any information passed to the police would be destructive, yet they were vulnerable. As Mohawks they brought out the paradox of difference by allegedly working with the police. The

scapegoating fury did not abate immediately. Cross went to the community centre where he yelled and pounded his baseball bat. Later, he and his collaborators were confined and almost banished, made scapegoats by their own action.

The Municipality of Oka

Among the residents of Oka there were two clear camps. On one side was the mayor, the council, and the pro-golf faction. These were opposed by many citizens who were against the golf course expansion. The second group was motivated by both a concern for the environment and a desire for peace with Mohawks. In some of the public meetings, strong feelings on both sides were expressed. Each faction circulated a petition, one supporting and one opposing the mayor.

Mohawks

The Mohawks had a number of key internal rivalries. One of the most significant related to interpretations of the Law of Peace. One group, including elders Tom Porter and Jake Swamp, interpreted the Law of Peace as emphasizing a peaceful approach to life. The other perspective, represented by Louis Hall, called for violence to strengthen the Mohawk presence. (Hall had the Jewish people and Israel as mimetic models for his perspective.) Hall became the inspiration for the Warrior Societies. This foundational rivalry had an impact on internal conflicts in Akwesasne, *Kahnawà:ke*, and *Kanehsatà:ke*. In Akwesasne, lines split between pro- and anti-gambling factions, with the Warrior Society supporting the gambling effort. In Akwesasne and *Kahnawà:ke*, the issue of cigarette smuggling was significant and divisions were along the same lines. In the *Kanehsatà:ke* crisis, there was conflict over strategy and tactics. In all of these instances, one object of mimetic desire was to be the authoritative interpreter of the Great Law, another was to have control over what was happening.

As the crisis escalated, the various factions of *Kanehsatà:ke*, *Kahnawà:ke*, and Akwesasne united in a way they had not for a long time. The dominant structure was the unity of a common threat, although various rivalries did emerge from time to time. For example, when the warriors of *Kahnawà:ke* reached an agreement with the military and began dismantling the barricades on the Mercier Bridge, the people at the Treatment Centre at *Kanehsatà:ke* felt betrayed. At other times, people of *Kanehsatà:ke* thought there was too much outside influence from the people of *Kahnawà:ke* and Akwesasne.

The First Nations

A number of mimetic phenomena were evident among the First Nations. The Aboriginal victory in defeating the Meech Lake Accord through the efforts of Elijah Harper increased the First Nations' confidence to take action.⁴ The Mohawk Warriors became, in Girard's terms, external models for other Aboriginal people, especially the youth. Across the country, roads were barricaded following the example of Mercier Bridge. Cree leaders of Northern Québec have always maintained that they do not support violence, but they have also warned that they cannot

control the younger, militant band members who are strongly opposed to the hydro project. These younger Crees were keeping a close watch on the tactics of the Mohawk warriors in the summer of 1990. "There is no doubt that what the warriors have done will inspire the youth to possibly resort to violence," said Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come,⁵ a point reinforced by Cree Chief Bill Diamond. What becomes clear is that the Mohawk warriors became external mimetic Models for Aboriginal youth across the country.

South Shore Residents

On the south shore, there were numerous examples of scapegoat action taken by *Québécois(es)* against other *Québécois(es)*. There obviously was a sense of crisis in each situation. The various cases show other characteristics of the scapegoat. First, Jocelyne Desrosiers, who opened her store to Mohawk business, was told by vigilantes that there might be an "accident" if she didn't close her store. She introduced the paradox of difference in that she was both *Québécoise* and in solidarity with the Mohawks. As a store owner she was significantly visible (powerful) and very vulnerable.

When *Solidarité Châteauguay* tried to block the St. Lawrence Seaway, in mimesis of the Mohawks who had blocked Mercier Bridge, the police arrested some of their leaders. A mob of several thousand turned on the police smashing a cruiser (as the Mohawks had done); waving baseball bats and tire-irons; and throwing eggs, bricks, and rocks at the police as in a stoning. The police locked themselves in the detachment, thwarting the scapegoat action. At that time the crowd also turned on journalists in classic scapegoat style, forcing one woman to flee for her own safety. The police showed a paradox of difference by being both *Québécois* and a force against the mob action. Their smaller numbers made them vulnerable even though individually they were powerful.

On July 14, four anglophones carrying a Canadian flag were surrounded by a crowd and needed police help to escape. The crowd tried to burn a Canadian flag. The next day, a woman with a Canadian flag on her sweatshirt was attacked by two women. These examples introduced the paradox of difference: neighbours were the same in that they were neighbours, yet different as they were Canadian, as opposed to Québec, nationalists. Their symbols were powerful in the context since they went against the mainstream, standing for the Canada that was perceived to have rejected Québec. As a minority in the crowd, they were vulnerable.

Throughout, the mob action united a number of Euro-Canadian groups. Besides the angry commuters, fringe groups associated with white supremacist groups got involved.

The Government of Québec

Within the Québec government there was a rivalry over the approach to take in dealing with the crisis. Throughout, John Ciaccia wished to be conciliatory. Public Security Minister Sam Elkas threatened that the barricades must be dismantled or the government would take action. At various points, there was tension between

Ciaccia and more hawkish cabinet ministers. In mid-July, as Ciaccia negotiated an agreement that would have withdrawn many police, cabinet refused to back the agreement; hawks referred to the need to "break eggs to make an omelette" (quoting Lenin). The police ended up digging in more deeply. On the issue of food deprivation, there was a similar rivalry. On July 21, Claude Ryan said that this policy was government policy but Ciaccia pointed out that there never was a question of depriving them of food. Finally, on September 16, the government refused to accept an agreement that Ciaccia had negotiated.

When the question of military intervention was raised in the Québec cabinet in early August, there were three positions. Ciaccia was against military action, the hawks wanted a military solution, and Bourassa and Ryan were cautious. It took a military officer to convince the cabinet to avoid a military assault. In the end the military was called in but was not ordered to attack Mohawk positions. Later in August, Ciaccia tried to negotiate an end to the crisis but he had only one supporter in the cabinet committee. It is interesting to note that Ciaccia, the conciliator, was himself a Canadian of Italian background. Hence, his own identity would not have had as much at stake as that of the *pure laine Québécois* whose national honour was at stake and for whom there was an ethnonational mimetic rivalry with the *Onkwehón:we*.

Within the protagonist groups there were examples of the whole range of mimetic and scapegoat phenomena. Various cases showed a number of the key principles unearthed by Girard.

An Interpretative Narrative of the Crisis

I will now tell the story of the Oka/Kanehsatà:ke crisis of 1990 using the interpretative categories in the various forms of mimetic structures of violence. The story begins with 1721 with the arrival of the Sulpicians to Kanehsatà:ke and concludes with the Mohawks leaving the Treatment Centre in September 1990 and the immediate aftermath. Of necessity, the narration of the early periods will be telescoped; however, an overview of the structural developments before 1989 establishes the context—mimetic structures of violence are always rooted in previous structures.

The Colonial Period: 1721 to 1959

The arrival of the Sulpicians in 1721 to land granted by the king of France marked the beginning of the objectification of the Kanehsatà'kehró:non. In the colonial rivalries of North America the British and French were rivals in a relational system. Among the French, the Jesuits and Sulpicians were rivals for hegemony over the religious affiliations of the First Nations.

After the British conquered New France, the Kanehsatà'kehró:non and the land to which they belonged were the objects of mimetic desire for the Sulpicians and the British. A bigger prize for the British, after the American Revolution, was retention of "British" North America, which at that time was largely French. The

Sulpicians swore allegiance to the British, aiding the British in their rivalry with the United States and in the French 1830s rebellion. They kept Kanehsatà:ke. Thereafter, there was common cause between the English and the Sulpicians, as though they were united, with the Kanehsatà'kehró:non as perpetual scapegoats. The structure of a violence of differentiation was entrenched with the Privy Council ruling of 1912 reaffirming the right of the Sulpicians to the land.

That this structure was still intact in 1959 is shown by the fact that despite the protests of the Mohawks, nothing was done to stop building the original golf course.

Regaining a Capacity to Act: 1959 to 1989

As long as they were acted upon, Aboriginal people were sufficiently removed from the dominant groups in society that no true mimetic rivalry was possible between First Nations and Euro-Canadians. Between 1959 and 1989 Aboriginal people developed a voice. Mimetically, they were inspired by the events of Wounded Knee in the United States. It was also a time when the language of self-determination and liberation from colonialism was in the air. Many new countries were formed from the ashes of the British Empire. Strong Aboriginal leaders, with no hesitancy in standing up to the "First Ministers" of Canada, began to emerge. The Indian Brotherhood became the Assembly of First Nations. Other Aboriginal peoples developed national organizations with leaders who could represent them at meetings of prime minister and premiers. What had been external mediation—having a distant mimetic model—now became internal mediation—having a model who could be a rival. Aboriginal people began to develop rivalries with dominant societies over land and jurisdiction.

Meanwhile, new dynamics were emerging in the Canadian political relational system. Before this time, all but the French elite were so spiritually distant (in Girard's phrase) from English Canada that they could not see themselves as political or economic rivals. That changed with the 1960s Quiet Revolution in which Québécois began to frame the relationship with Canada as colonial. They wanted full equality as a people, which, for many of them, meant sovereignty. A mimetic crisis over difference was developing. When Canada was formed, Québec was one of two founding peoples. Canada was meant to be a French-English partnership. Through language laws outside of Québec and waves of English-speaking immigrants, the relative power of English Canada had increased considerably. Some voices within Canada, particularly in the West, began to frame the country as consisting of ten provinces, rather than two founding peoples. The French fought for, and got, some concessions, but sovereignty was the goal. The defeat of the 1980 referendum was a setback, but many Québécois were determined to get what the English had—control over their own country.

There was a significant rivalry between Québec and the rest of Canada. The rivalry was over difference—Québec wanted to be recognized as a "distinct society." Meanwhile the Québécois were losing difference—evident in changes such as the shift to becoming secular entrepreneurs (like the English). Although

significant differences in orientation between Québec and the rest of Canada remain, traditional marks of differentiation, such as Québec being Roman Catholic and less entrepreneurial, are being eroded.

In the relational system of Aboriginal people and Quebecers there was a rivalry over who had the stronger claims to self-determination. Québec argued that they had a viable political territory—Québec—and that, as a nation, they could determine for themselves to become a sovereign country. Premiers of Québec were welcomed as heads of state in Paris. Mohawks argued that they had never given up their sovereignty, and asserted it by using passports issued in Onondaga by the Iroquois Confederacy and seeking recognition in Europe.

The Decision to Build a Golf Course

The most significant relational system for the *Kanehsata'keró:non* in 1989 included the municipality of Oka. The decision to build a golf course and develop housing in the Pines made the Pines an object of mimetic desire, as previously discussed. The establishment of a Longhouse group at *Kanehsata:ke* meant that Mohawks were rediscovering their language and ties to the land. Recovery of their sense of identity switched the framing of the satisfiers for their identity needs. From being overtaken by a victim mentality they developed a sense of being an historical people with pre-contact ties to the land, and the land had become a non-negotiable satisfier of identity needs. As it became more significant to them, the municipality of Oka became more determined to go ahead with plans to build the golf course. The decision to build the golf course set in motion a new relational trajectory that eventually led to the crisis.

The Decision to Occupy the Pines

The decision by three Mohawks to occupy the Pines likewise set in motion developments that would lead to the crisis. Had there been no occupation there would have been no crisis. The decision to stand up to the hegemonic structures of Canadian and Québec government, law, and police was mimetically inspired by other Mohawk actions at *Kahnawà:ke* and Akwesasne. The decision to defend the Pines physically was later mimed by the Oka municipality through the SQ.

The Defeat of the Meech Lake Accord

When the Meech Lake Accord failed, there was a crisis of difference within Québec. For example, the idea of special recognition as a distinct society prompted other provinces—Newfoundland and British Columbia—to mimetically assert that they were also distinct. In fact, one of the arguments against the Meech Lake Accord was that Québec was not the only distinct province. The pressures from Western Canada for Senate reform—advocating that every province elect the same number of senators—likewise tore at Québec's sense of difference.

Within the relational system of Canada there was a sense of crisis at the defeat of the Meech Lake Accord. Quebecers became united in their hurt, anger, and determination to take control of their own destiny. The government of Brian

Mulroney was devastated; Mulroney had staked his place in history on a national reconciliation brought about by the Meech Lake Accord. The sense of crisis made Canada ripe for the scapegoat mechanism.

The SQ Attack

The SQ attack on July 11, 1990, caused an almost instantaneous change in relational structures in Canada. The media focus shifted from post-mortems on the demise of the Meech Lake Accord to what became known as the Oka crisis. With the closing of Mercier Bridge, the Mohawks became scapegoats for many Quebecers. Any anger and frustration that they had toward Canada, which was invulnerable, they could take out on Mohawks who were much more vulnerable. In particular, Ron Cross, a.k.a. Lasagna, became the warrior whom they loved to hate. Had many Quebecers had their way, the army would have used force to bring the Mohawks to their knees.

The Escalation of Violence

As support for the Mohawks by Aboriginal people built up, the crisis quickly took on national proportions. As never before, the Aboriginal people had recovered a capacity to act and to act together in solidarity. For them, Bourassa, Mulroney, Siddon, the SQ, and the local politicians supporting the anti-Mohawk action played a scapegoat role. There was a nearly unanimous feeling among Aboriginal people that this group, who together controlled the forces oppressing the Mohawks, were *illegitimate, powerful, and different* and their interests, at least, were *vulnerable*.

Within the relational systems of Mohawks versus the SQ, the people of *Kahnawà:ke* versus Châteauguay, and the *Kanehsata'kehró:non* versus Oka, violence and tensions were increasing. Structures of mimetic doubling multiplied as Mohawk warriors and the SQ—"warriors"—squared off against one another. The burning of effigies in Châteauguay and the mob action against various individual scapegoats intensified the sense of urgency.

The Deployment of the Canadian Forces

With the deployment of the Canadian Forces, the Mohawks became the scapegoats of the Government of Canada. Enormous resources were used to surround, control, and harass the *Kanehsata'kehró:non*. The rhetoric of the prime minister and the deputy minister of Indian Affairs, referring to the warriors as terrorists, was meant to cast the Mohawk resistance as totally *illegitimate*. Ultimately, the scapegoating structures turned into failed scapegoating since the cause of the Mohawks gained legitimacy through public opinion, international support and the purchase of the land for them by the federal government.

The End of the Crisis

As the people holed up in the Treatment Centre left, there was again a change of structure. In large measure, the Mohawks were vindicated for the stand they took. Canadian consciousness concerning the injustice perpetrated against the Aborigi-

nal people had been raised, and there was widespread support for initiatives that would contribute to a better sense of justice for Aboriginal people. Insofar as there was scapegoat action against them by the government during the crisis, Canadians held a positive image of Aboriginal people after the crisis.

Attitudes of many English Canadians turned against Québec in a scapegoating backlash after the crisis. Before the crisis, many English Canadians thought in terms of keeping Québec in Canada at all costs, but now many wondered aloud if Québec wasn't the cause of many of Canada's problems. A vindictive spirit was kept alive for some time. Some articles in the Canadian press have made Québec out to be more racist than other parts of Canada, thus adding to the scapegoat echo.

By distracting Canada in a powerful way from the crisis caused by the defeat of Meech Lake and uniting Canadians in a common preoccupation with the crisis and the questions of Canadian identity that it raised, the crisis played a scapegoat function.

Holding Back the Violence

The description of the crisis in Chapter 10 and its mimetic/scapegoat interpretation in the previous sections highlight the near tragic results. The conflict did, indeed, shake Canada to its core. Examining the story closely reveals that there were many redemptive elements—many mimetic structures that seemed to hold the beast of violence at bay. First, there was the peace camp set up at Oka, meant to be a non-violent support effort for the Mohawks. Thousands came from across North America to offer a positive, non-violent show of support.

Second, during the military occupation, no one was shot. Near the end of the crisis, when feelings were running deep and the atmosphere was tense, the Mohawks performed a spiritual ceremony to give them protection from potential danger. The Warriors were told by the spiritual leaders that as soon as one shot was fired, the positive protective medicine would be neutralized. They never fired a shot. Years later, a Canadian soldier, reflecting on the fact that not one shot was fired by the military, attributed this in part to the fact that Canadians, through their peacekeeping training and experience, have learned that their role does not necessarily mean shooting and killing. They have become accustomed to playing this non-combative role. It may have made a difference when the impulse to fire a shot was very overwhelming.

These observations do not minimize the depth of the conflict or the severity of the emotional scars still carried by participants. They are not meant to gloss over the very violent forms of harassment directed at the Mohawks collectively and the beating of individuals. They do point to the fact that the crisis was resolved without the kind of bloodbath for which many were prepared. A mimetic imagination of blessing played a role with both groups. Warriors were looking to their spiritual leaders whose imagination was that of peace. Soldiers were imitating patterns of non-violence that they learned as peacekeepers.

Third, there were countless acts of support for those who were suffering. Many risked their own well-being to bring food to the Mohawks. Clergy volunteered as neutral observers. Many on both sides participated in long and arduous negotiations. Helpful bystanders put significant efforts into expediting peaceful initiatives.⁶ All in all, within the Oka/Kanehsatà:ke crisis, positive mimetic structures ultimately saved Canada from a contagion of bloodletting violence.

Within the crisis of Oka/Kanehsatà:ke of 1990, mimetic structures of violence appeared within many relational systems. These structures interacted with one another, intensifying the whole sense of crisis. It appears that most of those directly involved, along with most Canadians, had a sense of awe that they could be swept along in a chain of events that brought "peaceful" Canada to the very edge of massacre, bloodbath, and rampant violence across the country.

The defensive side of mimetic structures of violence were also in evidence. Mimetic structures of entrenchment involve taking a black and white stand on issues, dividing the world into friends and foes, refusing to be self-critical, and doing everything to save face. It becomes clear that within each of the primary stakeholder groups these same structures were evident. As people exhibited these traits they began to imitate the other side. Within these structures, perceptions are skewed—people from different groups interpret the same event very differently. As I spoke with someone who had been there throughout, he confirmed the presence of these structures. In fact, when he talked with people from different sides who had experienced the same event, the descriptions were so different that it would seem that they had been at different events.

Overall, I have been left with a sense of awe at the power of mimetic structures of violence and entrenchment to take over relational systems. From this sense of awe comes the question: What else could there be? The answer includes mimetic structures of blessing, the next concept to be developed.