

# **Community Meeting - Membership**

## **Flipchart Notes**

Tuesday, May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2010

Knights of Columbus

## **Group 1 Notes**

- Just because we heard it all our lives, doesn't make it right.
- Preservation of culture is important, where do we come from? Why are we addicted to the boundaries the government sets (inbreeding)? Diversification is okay too. We should be allowed to live anywhere. That's what membership is. We can fight for more. It's ours.
- Our needs have grown.
- If we stand united we can do it. With our numbers we can do it.
- All names were outsider names.
- Blood is not important.
- With decision versus exclusion. Outside loves that were fighting.
- Marry who you want and do what you want. We need to protect what little we have left.
- Eventual municipality status. If you open that door, where and when do you close it?
- Government looks at blood. So it's up to us to change that.
- Letters are based on Indian Act.
- Government has to pay us based on numbers. They want to keep us down.
- Our way is to absorb people who don't have blood – teach our language and culture. Build a strong community.
- Acting as an Indian Act.
- We are unique, stick with our own. Don't marry out.
- Matrilineal culture means that the mother teaches the kids their culture.
- Stick with our own.
- 1940's World War 2 – Brought their women back, even so, brought up Mohawk way.
- Marrying out is not the only reason for loss of language and culture.
- Traditional Law – those who seek protection, follow White Roots of Peace.
- We have to be strong people and stop hurting each other.
- Let's make this generation stronger so that the next generation and others will benefit.
- Gather their information – seek information from longhouses.
- Canadian Act and Indian Act say that it is reserved for natives, not natives and whoever else.
- Letters were sent prematurely. Should've wait until this community can come together in a unified decision, 3 Longhouses/Band Council/Others.
- The 1973 evictions. 35 years later, we're in the same position. It's going to fail.
- Never going to end, we're fighting a losing battle.

- In future, it will be even together. Love is blind.
- Suspend any further letters until all groups can decide how to move forward.
- Kids are a reflection of their parents. They will be made fun of.
- Kids are mean (half breeds, etc.)
- Teach them to marry Indians.
- Teach kids value, rather than to “marry Indians”. Language, culture, peace, respect, and values should be focused on.
- Not saying anyone can join “Club Mohawk” but if you have blood, you should make an effort to allow those things in. This is where we are headed.
- Need to teach your kids to be strong.
- Definition of Strong: How is it different? Strong values? Strong blood?
- Why are we forced to choose between our community and our dreams? Kids are closing themselves off to their potential.
- Throwing them out – denies them of strength.
- Collective Responsibility means if we are a community/nation, and we care, work together. Not a municipality.
- Start today – this is a start.
- Start now – draw the line. Keep getting diluted – if you marry out you’re jeopardizing your children’s lives.
- Something always brings you back to Kahnawà:ke.
- How do we make it better?
- I think to call us racist is wrong. It’s human nature to have these boundaries – not racist. It’s standing up for what is ours!!!
- Eviction letters are not meant to take away who you are. The point is to tell you. You live outside our boundaries. You marry out – get out – it’s just the way it is.
- Follow your heart? Follow it right out of Kahnawà:ke.
- If they loved you so much, they would consider your bloodlines and keep it within our own people.
- The government is the enemy, not us/each other.
- Their interpretation of these policies is assimilation. Their goal is assimilation. Residential Schools, Reserves, etc.
- We have to fight them however we can. If a few have to leave to save the collective, then that’s what we need to do.
- Mike Bush told a story of the Iroquois Caucus Condoleed Chief – 50 years ago we failed Kahnawà:ke. We haven’t done anything.
- We have to deal with the problem. Canada wants reserves out (McIvor, C-31, etc.)
- We can see it, share it, we need family, and we need rules to move forward, rules that everyone agrees to.
- Define criteria – bloodline? Culture/Identity?
- History – How did we do things before?
- How do we implement? Collect responsibility?
- Make a decision – Have a vote.

- Community needs to know what happened with consultation process.
- MCK: work harder on land claims.
- Is the Council of Elders being reinstated? Hope not.
- The process needs to be fairer.
- Because we've been under the Indian Act for so long, we need to "purge" that out of us. Go back to what is ours.

#### **Solutions:**

- Strengthening relationships with other reserves (mixers, socials, etc.)
- Indian Act is still oppressive; they just hide it better (maybe we're stronger now).
- '81 – we wanted women to get their rights back. Another group was fighting against that. So, instead of bringing women back, we knocked men out. They felt blindsided. It was a good decision and it would make it even.
- As long as you marry a native, it shouldn't matter.
- We're the only nation to lose birthright based on marriage.
- It slips through because not married. Children are paying the price.
- Smaller groups (meeting format).
- Feel that current situation is a move backwards.
- Marry out = Get out!

#### **Group 2 Notes**

- Membership Law can engender hatred. Need to address where this hatred comes from.
- Indian Act took away the power of women. It has come to the point that we have come away from traditional teachings. A lot of grief attached to all of our losses as Native people. Go back to when our culture was alive and well – 1876. Need for healing.
- Women were not all taught about what happens when one married a non-native. It was as difficult in the past as it is now.
- History: we welcomed outsiders when there was a need.
- Indian Act – Governments act to assimilate us.
- 1983: MCK/people brought back our women. No other reserve did this across Canada. Need to protect who we are as Onkwehón:we.
- A Mohawk woman also was subject to violence when she spoke about membership. Makes statement "marry out – stay out!" Her children were subject to violence as well.
- 1947 – Condoled Chief went to present in Ottawa a position on membership. Wanted our traditional ways to decide membership.
- When you look at non-entitlement, people of mixed marriages cannot come in to learn about their culture under the condition in the law that speaks about who can be entitled to what.
- What comes out should be inclusive – not something that breeds a lot of hatred.
- Need to heal community first. Get rid of membership. Go back to traditional ways. NO membership BUT citizenship.

- It should be okay for a non-native person to live with their family to provide and protect them.
- A non-native should not live here for free and never own land.
- Basis of our nation is family. They should be indoctrinated into our culture (mandatory).
- Good way to raise our numbers.
- We should not lose our people – we need to keep them here.
- A lot of people who moved out had clans and knew the language.
- In new or revised law – should state where cut off is as to who is a member.
- A lot of people do respect the law, one Mohawk woman had many children and they all married Mohawks.
- Lack of respect when one moves in and does not ask approval of the community. Traditionally, would have to ask approval.
- Hard on children from mixed marriages. They do not feel respected here.
- Children from mixed marriages should not have to choose between the cultures of the native and non-native parent.
- Children of mixed marriages do not know where they belong. They are condemned. They live with a lot of confusion as to who they are.

**Now Entitlement:**

- As a Mohawk person: born and raised here: only should have entitlement.
- Focus on culture preservation and inclusion of our people – blood quantum and membership are semantic issues.
- Not fair that non-native women are here and Indian women are pushed out. Not fair that non-natives get free services and natives have to pay. It's not fair that not even on the membership list and they are building a home.
- Focus on what a person can contribute. Don't look at taking but giving back. Look at citizenship rather than membership. Look at a community building law.

**Group 3 Notes**

- Start by picking and choosing – this is wrong.
- Every 10 years we change things/laws.
- No laws should be written in stone - amendable.
- Laws, morals, etc. change.
- What should the criteria be for the “letter” and why is it sent?
- Community should decide on the solution and content of letter – not just MCK.
- Not hearing a consensus regarding the letters.
- Not clear on what entitlements are.
- Status Indians versus Mohawk registry.
- The people who don't belong here are people that have no lineage, non-Mohawk parents.
- Letters were “only” sent to non-native with no ties.
- No blood quantum – Non-native.

- Were any letters sent to the wrong person? The Eastern Door said this occurred. The person had an address outside the community to prove they didn't live here = evidence.
- What constitutes a person living here?
- Don't use blanket criteria.
- We need to assess individually. 120 cases – possibly.
- Public Process? Procedure according to new decision-making process.
- Better verification process for letters.
- Neighbors know who lives next door.
- Parents teach kids, but evolution has taken place – all up to the morals of the people – society changes.
- The issue is the letters to non-natives – no ties - do we support?
- Health care is soliciting doctors – communities are having them reside in the community.
- Residency – in current law.
- Need implementation of law.
- Everyone welcome to consultation – History Elder.
- No reason for any community member not to know the issue.
- MCR today.
- Took MCK a long time. Never brought forward that non-native could live here – why now?
- Glad we can come together to see past mistakes done to the women – hopefully, we don't make the same mistakes in the future.

**Pros:**

- Agree with letters – if we don't put a stop to non-natives, there will be nothing left.
- Were here discussing this because of our “compassion”, now were in a situation, we should go all the way!
- Respect 7 generations - but have to look back a few and these are our people – Mohawk mixed blood.
- Majority of group support the letters – 2 have no comment.
- Still in an Indian Act system. Peacekeepers don't enforce law – new Justice system could do this.
- It's up to the mother's to teach their children.
- Indian Act laws: Trespassing is still in affect today.
- We still depend on the Indian Act.
- This is the closest we've come to a solution.
- Grew up knowing the rules (clans, matrilineal).
- 1991: the town wanted blood quantum – moratorium.
- Agree with letters to non-natives (no clan, no language, no background).
- Tax-free to them!
- Good starting point.
- Create laws in Kahnawà:ke. Law supercedes any other law.
- Consultation was done for great grandparents.
- Look for future 7 generations principle.
- You can't create an Indian.

- There's a law where you can make your own decision (1981-1990-2003).
- Understand why the letters were sent, but based on an ineffective law.
- Traditional factor/process?
- Hard liners.
- Require process to move forward.
- Not being racist, our law has been here. When a native marries out, they live in Chateauguay.
- Protect what we have left.
- We have our businesses, schools. We need to build on what is ours. They have theirs.
- Research was done "lots".
- Always been the custom, even before Indian Act, for everyone – men and women.

**Cons:**

- Internal fighting – Government is loving this.
- How do we change our fight against the white government – Indian Act laws (instead of family fighting)
- Would the Longhouse support this process? Eviction letters? Law?
- Confederacy feels as though they are the lead.
- Are we trying to suit the needs of a few?
- In breed? Change the gene pool – more the issue of 1981.
- Agree but disagree.
- Non-natives came through our territory - railway, seaway, etc. they're no longer here.
- Can't survive – Will we have to tax?
- What is the rationale to have non-native to be here for helping with living, the sick, etc. we have meals on wheels, etc. home care.
- Not a good rationale.
- Non-natives should be entitled to tax-free, etc. but shouldn't feel threatened by every non-native weekend visits.
- Indian Act caused for the discrimination against the women.
- Law limits us as a Mohawk people. Law and letters.
- Confused – why the letters are sent?
- People are people – what are white people?
- Creating more division, how do we get more land?
- Why do we have our own Mohawk woman asking to come home? Non-native women are here – no questions!
- Degrading – enough since 1970's.
- Disagree with "how" the letters were done. There wasn't enough investigation.
- Land is diminishing.
- Community has to evolve to the times.
- In future, we won't have the language and people to carry on traditions.
- Should it matter if the father is non-native, because of clan?
- There is a law in place – people should follow it.
- Letters were wrong.

- The women know the rules of Kahnawà:ke Membership law – they made their choice.
- Mohawks live out of town, and they pay tax.
- Supposed to be using the Great Law – “The only Law”.
- Criteria listing - Process of Investigation should’ve been done before letter gets sent. Not just a phone call, it causes stress.
- Investigation into allegation.
- Who will create it?
- Criteria = 4 great grandparents.
- Should only have 1 great grandparent – told as a young person.

### **Recap**

- No consensus on eviction letters.
- More community members for them than against them.
- Require better verification process.
- In the past: Compassion brought us here.
- On-going issue: this is the closest we’ve come to a possible solution.
- Indian Act laws apply, causing conflict to Mohawk traditions.
- Parents (mothers) are the teachers.
- Agree with letters being sent, put a stop to non-natives living in Kahnawà:ke.
- Great Law is the only law.
- Residency is part of current Membership law.
- Don’t make same mistakes as past.
- Should there be a public process/procedure for this issue?
- Not clear on what entitlements are – what is a white person?
- This is not a blood quantum issue. It is a non-native issue.
- The issue was never brought forward in the past to have non-natives live in Kahnawà:ke – why now?
- Must respect 7 generations principle.
- Not being racist – Law is in place.
- Kahnawà:ke has our own schools/businesses – we need to build for ourselves.
- We have the law – it’s here (1981-1984-2003) –different stages, changes, evolutions, etc.
- People have to understand “they” make their own decisions.
- We grew up knowing the rules.