

Community Control of Education:
How the Mohawk Community of Kahnawake is reclaiming their schools

Tiffany Ryan

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Sociology and Anthropology

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Masters of Arts at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

August 2005

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ISBN: 0-494-10199-7

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ABSTRACT

Community Control of Education:
How the Mohawk Community of Kahnawake is reclaiming their schools

This study is an ethnographic exploration of the measures taken by the Mohawk community of Kahnawake to reclaim the education of their youth and of the role that education plays in achieving their self-determination.

Through a combination of fieldwork, interviews with teachers, parents, and school administrators, the research is intended to document the challenges that the community faces and the different strategies adopted to overcome them. The legacy of residential schools and the attempt to obliterate Indigenous cultures and languages, continues to keep education and schooling at the centre of Kahnawake's struggle to maximize self-determination.

The Kahnawake community continues to define educational curriculum and content. Members express enthusiasm in providing youth with the necessary tools to protect their culture and autonomy by attempting to seek community consensus on curriculum content. Achieving consensus though, can prove difficult as seen by the demise of the Educational Park project. Nonetheless, by examining the Youth Conference and the Entrepreneurial Workshops, this thesis details how Kahnawake schools have been able to respond to the needs of its students.

The community's effort to assume control of their education system has created an opportunity to reclaim their history, traditions, and language through a process of decolonization. Through this process, the community is able to assert responsibility for any developments made, which is an essential part of community control of education.

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Table of Acronyms

Below is a list of acronyms that are used throughout this thesis as well as an explanation of what each acronym stands for. The first time the Organization is referred to in the text, the full name will be given. Subsequent times it will appear as an acronym.

| | |
|-------|---|
| CURA | Community University Research Alliance |
| DIAND | Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development |
| INAC | Indian Affairs Canada - Abbreviation of DIAND |
| IRSRC | Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada |
| KCCS | Kahnawake Community Consultation Services |
| KCSC | Kahnawake Combined Schools Committee |
| MCK | Mohawk Council of Kahnawake (Band Council) |
| SHERC | Social and Humanities Research Council |

Chapter 1 Introduction

Introduction to the Research

Given the history of relations between Indigenous people in Canada and the dominant Quebec society, Indigenous people have little reason to trust National or provincial education systems. Up until the 1960's the educational policies of Canada were designed to destroy Indigenous cultures. In a way, Canada had embarked on a process of cultural genocide in the eyes of Indigenous people, not least through the introduction of Residential schools (Barman, 1996).

Indigenous communities across Canada have independently begun a process of actively taking control of educating the youth of their communities. The first community to do so was Kahnawake a Mohawk community located just outside of Montreal in the province of Quebec. The central focus of this thesis is to first offer an understanding of how this process of taking control has taken place in the community of Kahnawake and what this has meant for how Mohawk children are educated.

This thesis attempts to provide a brief history of the educational autonomy movement in Kahnawake. The central focus however is to examine how this process of taking control has taken place within the community. Secondly, the role the community has played and continues to play in defining what is or should be part of the educational curriculum/content is identified. Thirdly, to what extent these schools and the teaching pedagogies are responding to the need of youth and their future in the community is discussed.

When the community of Kahnawake reclaimed their children's education in the 1970's, they were initiating a process of taking control of how their children were being

taught. It was no longer only about what Mohawk children were learning, but also about who was teaching them, where they were learning it, and with which method of teaching. Community members who removed their children from the local provincial high school did so because they had no confidence in the province's ability to provide adequate schooling for Mohawk students. The community felt that the state structure had failed their children yet again (Arbuthnot, 1984: 45; Blanchard, 1980: 462).

Starting up the Kahnawake Survival School¹ set a precedent in the community, and with further educational developments by the community, the institutionalization of education in Kahnawake became a reality. In order to create a curriculum that met the Mohawk local reality, the curriculum needed to be reflective of Mohawk pedagogy. In other words, how Mohawks think and create their mode of teaching needed to be incorporated into the curriculum. Mohawk pedagogy is based on the notions of student centered learning in that the student's aptitudes are explored within the curriculum. This means that whatever subjects the student shows interest and skill in, are the subjects that the student learns and participates in the most. Mohawk pedagogy is geared towards developing the whole student with the knowledge and experience of the Mohawk community and participation of parents. However, to what extent the student centered system reflects the needs, desires and their participation in choosing what they learn has been less subject to discussion.

In the next section of this chapter, the theoretical framework that has been used to shape the discussions and the research done will be discussed. A brief summary of this section will be followed by a description of each of the chapters that make up this thesis.

¹ See the chapter on the history of Indigenous education for a description of how this took place.

Theoretical Framework

Throughout the fieldwork, I was attempting to understand how the community of Kahnawake has gone about taking control of their education and the consequences of this by considering the historical effects of colonization. I used the theory that informs the process known as “decolonizing the mind” (Nandy, 1997). I also followed James C. Scott’s (1998) theory of the state, and Foucault (1994) on governance.

Foucault’s writes about the emergence of subjugated knowledges and argues that the knowledge systems of subjugated peoples include a critique of dominant society (Foucault, 1994: 41). As Indigenous people in Canada reintroduce their traditional knowledge to their younger generations, they do so as a criticism of what has and is being taught about Indigenous people and to them by the dominant Euro-Canadian society. For decades Canadian education policy and structures have tried to assimilate Indigenous peoples into the dominant Euro-Canadian culture, for instance through Residential schools.

There is a struggle that takes place once criticisms emerge and it is in this struggle that we can attempt to shed light on the central issues (Foucault, 1994: 45). By looking at the history of colonization and the consequent decolonization processes that are taking place, I hope to understand how Indigenous people like the Mohawks of Kahnawake through the struggle of reintroducing their knowledge are regaining control. By looking at how the structures of the Canadian state have marginalized Indigenous knowledge, I hope to understand why this situation occurred and how it can be changed in the future.

Decolonizing the Mind

Albert Memmi (1965) wrote about the relationship of the colonizer and the colonized as a process that defines colonization. He discussed how colonization is a

policy created by a group of individuals (the colonizers) that “impose and import the way of life of their own country” (Memmi, 1965: 4), in a place that is already inhabited by another group of people (the colonized). Colonization policies ensure that the colonizers are in a position of control over the lives of the colonized, in order to survive in the colony. The imposition is placed on indigenous people with the intent of taking control of the new country, hence the indigenous peoples become colonized, and the importing people the colonizers.

Colonization in Canada was a process that saw the imposition and importation of a distinctly European way of life. The British political system was replicated and imposed in the new colony, English and then later English and French became the official languages to be spoken, and social institutions such as schools, hospitals and churches with European based ideas of conduct began to open its doors for the newly arriving Euro-Canadian population.

As Memmi points out, the indigenous population does not normally fit into this new way of life in the colony. He shows how this new way of life for the colonizers is usually at the expense of the indigenous population. The point of the colony for the colonizer is to recreate their home country but with themselves in a better social position than they were previously. When the settlers arrive in the new colony, the indigenous people appears to stand in the way of fulfilling this goal, so they go about imposing their way of life, until the indigenous population is trapped into the colonial system (Memmi, 1965).

Memmi describes the colonizers as using racism and terror as a means of ensuring that the colonized were to be thought of as inhuman and therefore unable to

participate in activities geared at their own social mobility. The colonizers would use terror as a means of crushing any form of uprising that the colonized may try to organize.

Memmi also describes how the colonizer re-writes history in order to justify their actions to themselves. Consequently, this history is what is taught to their children, as well as to the children who are being colonized, meaning that their history is effectively erased (Memmi, 1965: 94).

In this way, colonial education takes away the tools necessary to build identity, and does not allow for the colonized to have an understanding of their own history. Colonial education blurs the distinction between colonial ideas and traditional indigenous ideas, leaving students unable to distinguish their own culture from the one being enforced.

After Canada had been successfully colonized, the colonization of Indigenous people continued in what has been referred to by Ashis Nandy (1997) as a second form of colonization, the colonization of the mind. She states that “this colonization colonizes the minds in addition to bodies and it releases forces within the colonized societies to alter their cultural priorities once and for all” (Nandy, 1997: 170). In Canada, the force came through the Residential schools², where the purpose was to rid Indigenous people of their “Indianess” and make them Euro-Canadian citizens.

² Residential schools were set up all over Canada in the 1890's for the purpose of educating Indigenous children. They were funded by the Federal government and administered by the Catholic and Protestant churches. Many abuses took place in the schools mainly because of the way the schools were set up and because of the purpose the schools were to serve, namely the forced assimilation of Indigenous children into the Canadian mainstream. The schools were finally closed in the 1950's. For more information on the history of Residential schools please see Barman, 1996.

In David Perley's article Aboriginal Education in Canada as Internal Colonialism he examines educational problems experienced by Indigenous peoples in Canada with a concept called the "internal colonial model". This model has been applied broadly to describe the relationships between the colonizer and the colonized in places that European settlers have colonized. He describes "aboriginal education in the context of institutional arrangements that have been established by a manifest dominant group" (Perley, 1993: 119).

In the same way that Memmi describes colonization, Perley summarizes colonialism into four basic components; forcing the colonized into an unequal relationship with the dominant society, adopting policies that are designed to destroy or suppress the colonized way of life, manipulating and managing the colonized through state institutions, and justifying the oppression and exploitation of the colonized through racist ideologies (119).

Marie Battiste an Indigenous scholar from Saskatchewan in her article Enabling the Autumn Seed: Toward a Decolonized Approach to Aboriginal Knowledge, Language, and Education, also agrees with Memmi's understanding of the relationships between the colonizer and the colonized. She uses his understandings to show how the Canadian state operates under a condition of cognitive imperialism towards indigenous peoples in Canada, using racism to maintain their power. She goes further by offering solutions to how now, in a post-colonial framework, Indigenous people can work towards a process of decolonization. She says that "We must acknowledge the colonial shadow through a thorough awareness of the socio-historic reality that has created the current context... only then can we move beyond the personal dimension of blaming ourselves

and seek to heal the nation with each of our own small but significant determined steps” (Battiste, 1998: 24). In this way she is showing how decolonization can be a reality once colonialism is realized as part of Indigenous people’s history.

Achille Mbembe best describes the concept of the post-colony in his article Provisional Notes on the Postcolony. He describes the post-colony as a “particularly revealing (and rather dramatic) stage on which are played out the wider problems of subjection and its corollary, discipline” (Mbembe, 1992: 3). It is the space where the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized changes because of the need to share the same living space. With the familiarity that develops between the two, the result is mutual zombification where both become weak (4). It is in this space that Indigenous people believe that they can take control of their institutions, and work towards sovereignty from Canada.

Resistance to the process of colonization on the part of the colonized has been part of the process from the beginning. The indigenous population in Canada have used different forms of resistance and used different tactics to combat the domination of the colonizers since the colonial system was created. One significant way this is taking place is how across Canada the Indigenous population is taking back education and in effect, decolonizing the next generations minds through education. The Mohawk community of Kahnawake was one of the first communities to start this.

Decolonization of the mind is a process where colonized people reintroduce past knowledge and past understandings of their way of life before colonization to themselves, while recognizing what the process of colonization has taught them (Nandy, 1997). This

process usually takes hold in the education of younger generations and is a form of resistance to the continuance of colonization and the role of the colonized.

What is taught to Mohawk children about their culture, and a return to a traditional ideology within the community of Kahnawake, is not possible without recognizing and understanding the influence colonization has had on Mohawk traditions. The Mohawk traditional oral and experientially-based learning styles needs to be considered along side Euro-Canadian subject-centered learning in classrooms with set times and standardized testing. Efforts are being made by Mohawk educational authorities to integrate both styles, with practicality and relevance of both styles being considered, in order to continue to develop Mohawk pedagogy that meets the community's needs.

One way these needs are being addressed is through a process of de-colonizing the minds (Nandy, 1997: 176, Longboat, 1986: 39) of Kahnawake learners by reintroducing the memories of Mohawk culture before colonization, but at the same time recognizing the role colonization had on those memories through "cultural dialogue" (Spindler 1990). Cultural dialogue enables community members to agree to disagree on whether cultural values are in opposition to one another or may be able to complement one another.

The theory of de-colonization of the mind also addresses how taken-for-granted traditions, which were demeaned by the colonizer and more or less abandoned, are revived into contemporary practices. What was once understood as a traditional practice in everyday life before colonization is given spiritual relevance today. In Iroquois cultures, the transformation of the longhouse from a dwelling to a revered place of

spirituality can be seen as an example of this. The oral tradition of story telling once took place in the longhouse. It was not an organized event, instead it was something that took place when the time was right and an elder was moved to tell a story in the longhouse at the time. These stories were designed to teach the people about their way of life, and what their cultures values were. They were an integral part of education in Indigenous cultures. Modern practices of having families in separate dwellings meant that people tend to be in the longhouse for organized events. Therefore storytelling is something that is more organized and takes place at designated times.

The Mohawks of Kahnawake began the process of taking control over their children's education because a significant number of community members felt that provincial schools were not meeting their educational needs. There was not enough Indigenous content in the curriculum, and Indigenous people in general were often falsely portrayed historically in provincial curricula. They felt that this undermined the self-confidence of the youth. Even though the Mohawks have successfully created an educational system, the realization of de-colonization can only come to fruition if they become economically self-sufficient. Therefore the need to develop economic programs in Kahnawake schools to teach students skills for individual and community development is important. As will be seen in the chapter on entrepreneurial skills, this is a consideration in new curriculum developments.

For Mohawks in Kahnawake, the reason for these developments is understood as a way to create a community of Mohawks who are autonomous, self- sufficient, and involved in their community. For the federal governing body over Indigenous People in

Canada the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND), Kahnawake taking control of their own education is about giving more responsibility to the Band Council which has shown capability in managing funds allotted to them vis-à-vis the fiduciary relationship that exists between all Indigenous communities and DIAND.

The Imposition of State Structures

When the federal government created the Indian Act, it enacted a simplified scientific understanding of Indigenous People in Canada that ignored Indigenous local realities, de-valued their knowledge, and de-humanized their existence. This type of situation is similar to what James C. Scott (1998) describes in Seeing like a State: How certain Schemes to improve the human condition have failed. Scott describes how simplified schemes of social engineering developed by modern nation states ignore the realities and diverse collective knowledge of the people whose lives are directly affected by these schemes. He shows how these schemes are imperialistic in that the state structure extends their control over areas economically, geographically, and socially, which they did not previously control.

When the Canadian government enacted the Indian Act, they were extending their control over the lives of Indigenous people through the Act. The imperialistically based Indian Act reduces Indigenous peoples' existence to a financial grid of how close different Indigenous communities are to assimilation into Canada³. Despite its ineffectiveness and limitations over Indigenous peoples' growth as peoples of diverse

³ DIAND gives bands that are financially organized according to the guidelines stipulated in the Indian Act more autonomy over their resources, because it is believed that the band requires less DIAND intervention. This is why some communities have band-operated schools whereas others do not.

nations, DIAND is still using the Indian Act as the governing tool in dealing with all Indigenous issues in Canada today⁴.

The Mohawks of Kahnawake are considered by DIAND to be part of the larger category of Indian; a delineation based on the combined language, heritage, physiology and cultures of Indigenous people across Canada all grouped together. There is a power dynamic inherent in this definition in that Indigenous people were not involved in this definition. It does not recognize the differences that exist between the diverse nations indigenous to Canada. The term Indian was created by the Canadian state. This is an example of a state structure that simplifies people into categories for its own purposes of control. The category “Indian” collapses all Indigenous people⁵ into one general category that negates the unique governing structures that exist in each nation. It also does not recognize the names people call themselves, which show how the nations were different from each other.

Another term that is commonly used to describe the Mohawk people is Native. It is often employed by academics and refers to people who existed in places throughout the world prior to colonization by European-based cultures. In as much as it is a generalized term referring to many different peoples, it acknowledges that there is a colonial history and that the people being referred to are indigenous to where they live.

Different Indigenous peoples are re-introducing their cultures and their languages to themselves. As this takes place, Indigenous people are taking control of how they are

⁴ For more criticisms please see the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples report, 1995.

⁵ This definition does not include the Inuit people, as the Inuit were considered to be apart from other Indigenous people.

defined. With the re-introduction of the Mohawk language⁶ in Mohawk communities, a great deal of variation in how people identify themselves has developed. Prior to the widespread use of the Mohawk language, people commonly referred to themselves as Mohawk, an English name referring to one of their territories in the Mohawk Valley. Intrinsic in this definition is the understanding that the Mohawks are part of the Mohawk nation, which is part of the Iroquois confederacy. Members of the community between the ages of 30 and 60 still refer to themselves as Mohawk, reflecting the language loss of this generation. Today most youth refer to themselves as Kanienhaka:ke, which is the Mohawk way of saying People of the Flint. The Kanienhaka:ke are part of the Haudenoshone confederacy, the Mohawk word for Iroquois.

The Mohawks of Kahnawake's relationship to the rest of the Indigenous peoples in Canada is distant in that they see themselves as a distinct nation apart from other Indigenous peoples in Canada. They can empathize with individual struggles taking place in different communities of different Indigenous nations but not at the expense of their own struggles. There is a closer relationship with other Mohawk communities and communities within the confederacy, but these relationships are based on the understanding that they are their own community. Throughout my research, I am using both Mohawk and Indigenous people interchangeably where appropriate because both terms are used in the community.

In Kahnawake, language and culture are not independent entities to be addressed separately. Rather both language and culture are systems that are intertwined and thought of as the backbone of curriculum and schooling in the community. The community is

⁶ The issue of language in the community of Kahnawake is addressed in the chapter on Community debates on the Education Park project.

actively seeking to increase the number of community members that can be considered to possess language competence in the Mohawk language and not just able to use the Mohawk words in English conversations, but can produce sentences based on their knowledge of the language. The same holds true for cultural competence. The desire is to have community members who not only practice Mohawk culture in ways such as performing beadwork, or participating in the Sweat lodge, but they should also know why Mohawks do this and what it means (Casson, 1981: 16-19).

Through a process of decolonizing the mind, the community of Kahnawake is addressing what damage has been done to the community with the imposition of state structures. They are doing this by focusing on Mohawk culture and the Mohawk language in the education of their youth. This thesis attempts to examine how the Mohawks of Kahnawake are controlling this process.

In the next section, a breakdown of the chapters that make up this thesis is given. A brief description of each chapter is provided.

Chapter Breakdown

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. The first chapter is the introduction, which outlines the research by looking at the theoretical framework used to inform the research. The second chapter discusses what types of methods were used for the research. The third chapter briefly outlines the history of Indigenous relations in Canada as it relates to this research. I outline the highlights in history that have an impact on relations in comparison with the history of Indigenous education. The fourth chapter briefly reviews the history of Indigenous education. It is with the hopes of situating how

education has come to the point that it is currently at, that attention is given to a historical examination of how Indigenous people in Canada have been educated.

The next three chapters discuss the research that I did in the community of Kahnawake. Specifically, the fifth chapter discusses an education park project that was supposed to take place in the community. The purpose of this chapter is to open up the discussions that are taking place in the community about education, and to hopefully determine what some of the issues about education in the community of Kahnawake are and how they are being addressed.

The sixth chapter discusses a youth conference that I participated in with the hopes of understanding how educational needs are being met in the community. This chapter shows how the community takes control of curriculum developments and implements ideas that solidify control over their youth. The seventh chapter discusses workshops that I attended in the community of Kahnawake that were offered by the high school where I conducted my fieldwork. The purpose of this chapter is to show how Kahnawake educational authorities inform the decisions they make about what will be taught in Kahnawake schools. The final chapter of the thesis presents my research findings.

Chapter 2 Fieldwork

Introduction

Throughout my fieldwork the focus was on three events that were taking place in the community of Kahnawake while I was there. The first focus was on a project that was to bring together three schools under one roof in a complex that was to be called the Education Park. The new project was supposed to address the shortcomings that existed with the school facilities, as I will discuss later in the chapter on the debates on the Education Park project. The project ultimately failed in the sense that it was abandoned, but the process the project went through in the community was enlightening. I conducted interviews to find out more about the community's impressions on this project as well as reading up on the project in reports and in the newspaper.

The second focus was on a Youth Conference that was being held by one of the schools in the community. The conference was held in order to address the desires of youth to know more about careers available to them, as well as providing them with a forum to discuss where they see their community moving towards in the future. This will be discussed further in the chapter on the youth conference. It provided me with an opportunity to participate as a student and observe the relations between students and teachers in different environments.

The third focus was on entrepreneurial skills workshops that were held in one of the schools. The workshops came about as a follow up of the information that was received by the organizers of the youth conference. Participants indicated that they would be interested in attending a workshop on entrepreneurial skills, so the school made arrangements for this to happen. I participated in these workshops, but spent more time

observing how the youth participated and interacted with the presenter during the workshops.

The community of Kahnawake tends to be weary of anthropologists and researchers who are not members of their community¹. My entry into the community was based on previously established relationships I had made with a few families in Kahnawake, who understood my research and had agreed to help me meet people to speak with as well as introduce me to school officials. I expected to meet with some resistance from people who did not want to participate in my research and I anticipated meeting barriers and perhaps not being welcome in the community. However, generally I did not meet with any objections.

I was also sensitive to how I was constructing the field, paying attention to the fact that it was the relationships I had previously established with friends from Kahnawake that were informing my research. Amit (2000:6) points out that “the construction of an ethnographic field involves efforts to accommodate and interweave sets of relationships and engagements developed in one context with those arising in another”. My friends from Kahnawake were not directly related to my research, but have played an integral role in introducing me to key people in the community, as well as providing me with valuable insights into Kahnawake schools.

Of paramount importance in my fieldwork was to become familiar with the space allocated for education, such as the schools, the Education Centre, and the Cultural

¹ There is extensive research that has been done on Indigenous People in Canada, particularly in Kahnawake. Residents of the community are weary of strangers and researchers as they feel like they are on display or misunderstood.

Centre. I wanted to understand how space allotted for educational use is occupied, who uses it, and where the space is located is in the community. Space is a substantial concern in the community, as there is a fear that there will not be enough of it to allow for growth. As the population grows, there will be consequences on community planning affecting economic growth, housing, and recreational facilities.

In the next section I will outline how the research was designed so that how the research was shaped can be understood in relation to the methods used in the field.

The Research Design

The purpose of this project is to add to the already existing body of knowledge that examines Indigenous education as a process of decolonization for Indigenous communities (Battiste, 1998, Nandy, 1997, Perley, 1993, Taylor, Crago & McAlpine, 1993, Marglin, 1990, Barman, Hébert & McCaskill, 1986, Longboat, 1986). Like most anthropologists, I supported Hammersley & Atkinson's view that research should endeavor to be valuable to both the research community and the people who were participants. Thus I had hoped by focusing on something that was a preoccupation of the community, I would provide a body of knowledge that was useful to them as well as the broader academic debate on the topic. At the very least, I had hoped to be a catalyst for more reflection and discussion on the debates.

Hammersley and Atkinson (1996) discuss the attempts that have been made to map the various roles that researchers play in the field such as complete participant, participant as observer, observer as participant, and complete observer, pointing out that most field research involves roles somewhere in between. They show that the roles adopted depend on the purpose of the research and the nature of the setting. The different

roles I took on in the field helped me understand life in Kahnawake from different perspectives as each role had different sets of expectations and different sets of experiences as understood by those I worked with as well as myself.

The research was divided into several different phases. At first I conducted a survey of the literature on research already conducted on the question of Indigenous control of education, as well as the history and culture and new political and economic setting in the community. I familiarized myself with the people of Kahnawake and the community, and then conducted interviews with community members.

At first, part of my research was to familiarize myself with the history of the community as well as to make acquaintances and ask general questions on the issues that seemed to pre-occupy the community regarding to the education of the next generation. They frequently talked about “Mohawk values.” I tried to understand what the community meant by Mohawk values and how they felt education should socialize/instill these values in the next generation, but also how they thought these values informed their individual and community actions.

I looked at the history of educational schools, talked to administrators and decision makers, observed the schools and informal interactions with the youth, and I did a survey of the reports written on the schools. During this phase of the research, as I will discuss later, I realized not only that the issue of education is very political, but also that this is an issue that has divided the community. This meant I had to develop a research strategy that would enable me to talk to both sides without necessarily siding with anyone.

Ideally I should have included students more in my research, particularly adolescents who in the community do make certain decisions and choices. It would have

been important to include how they view community participation. For reasons of shortage of time as well as ethical issues I decided not to interview the youth, though I did talk to them informally and observe them in action. Future research in this area might want to include students to understand their perspective on what and how they learn.

In the next section I will discuss how the research was completed. The methods that were used for this fieldwork included a survey of the community-authored literature available in the community, participant observations in various activities and events, and interviews.

Library Survey

The nature of my research was to look at how the community's decision makers in education (namely administrators, teachers, parents, and the adult community members at large) are shaping education in Kahnawake now and for the future. I examined the literature available on Indigenous education in Canada as well as the History of Indigenous relations in order to come to a better understanding of education in Kahnawake.

I also relied heavily upon reports and surveys that have been conducted in the community by various Mohawk research teams and projects. There is considerable literature available on education and economic development in Kahnawake that has been published locally². I used the sources that were available to me from the Kahnawake Education Centre and analyzed the data presented in the research reports in order to add to the data I was eliciting from my interviews and participant observations.

² There is a publishing house in Kahnawake in the Kahnawake Education Centre. Most of the books for schools in Kahnawake are published through here. See the bibliography of this thesis for reports that were used in the following chapters, as well as the textbook published for Survival School that is referenced in the history chapters of this thesis.

Participant Observation

I chose to work in the community of Kahnawake as I have long relationships with some families in Kahnawake that go back to when I was a child. I have been visiting Kahnawake for over thirty years, becoming acquainted with people I now call friends and their families as well as acquaintances. These relationships were important assets and helped me to be accepted in the community as a researcher. I had no research funding, but since I could commute daily between the community and my home in Montreal, this at least partially solved the problem of financial support.

I began my research part-time in November 2002 when I participated in a Career and Health fair at Kahnawake Survival School. I acted as a volunteer giving out information to students and parents about a Fine Arts college in Northern Ontario. I continued my visits, making acquaintances until February 2003 when I was in the field full time to July 2003. I spent my time visiting and informally interviewing school administrators, teachers, parents, and community members at large. I traveled to the community daily from my home to conduct my fieldwork.

I went to the Kahnawake Survival School to participate in a two-day youth conference, three entrepreneurial workshops, and to observe classroom and school activities. I also observed teachers and administrators interact with students in classes and on rest breaks at Survival School. I took on these different roles in the community to come to a better understanding of how the community perceives control over education³. I was a researcher conducting interviews, a student in a youth conference and workshops, observer in classrooms and assemblies, and a volunteer in a job and health fair.

³ For more information on working with different roles in the fieldwork setting, please see Amit, 2000.

Initially my intention was to be a teacher's assistant in different classrooms. I had planned to network from the schools to reach the parents to speak with them and other family members, in order to come to an understanding of how they are participating in their children's schooling. Unfortunately, I could not gain access to the schools in such a way. In order to be a teacher's assistant I had to be hired by the Education Centre, and volunteering in a classroom was not something that was done. So I relied heavily upon the networking I made through my friends in the community to conduct interviews and participate in Kahnawake school life.

I participated in classroom activities, observing what took place and as a fellow student learning, so that I could come to a better understanding of the everyday experiences in the learning environment (Kornblum, 1996). I participated in the entrepreneurial workshops offered at Survival School to the senior class, as well as the Youth Conference that was hosted for the senior class at Survival School and Concordia University in 2002. I also observed teachers and administrators interact with students in classes and on rest breaks at Survival School.

Interviews

I interviewed 32 adult community members and tried to include those with direct links and interest in the education system either as providers or as beneficiaries such as parents of the school age children. I also included a minority who did not have direct vested interest in education. 18 of the people I interviewed were female and 14 were male. Of the 32 community members interviewed, 11 were teachers, 10 were parents, 5 were administrators, and 8 were community members with no direct ties to the education system in Kahnawake. There was some overlap in roles in that two people were both

teachers and parents, one was a parent and an administrator, and one was a teacher and an administrator. I chose the interviewees because of the roles they held within the community, and because they agreed to be interviewed.

The interviews took place in the homes of the people I was interviewing. The conversations lasted approximately for 1 to 1 1/2 hours. All of the interviews were one-on-one interviewee, except for one group discussion between two teachers, a community member, and myself.

The purpose of these interviews was to understand the importance of control over the schools in Kahnawake and the values used to shape education in the community from their point of view. It was to understand how they actually articulate and express their views, to what extent these expressed views rejected their practices, and to what extent they are aware of the gaps between their expressed views and goals and realities. To get a sense of the values used to shape education in the community from the point of view, of community members I also spoke to people about which educational programs they thought should be designed. I asked them what they perceived their role in education to be or if they should have one at all. These types of questions were meant to elicit responses geared towards understanding the community's perception on who controls what values are taught in Kahnawake schools.

One of the issues that I needed to be sensitive to was how emotionally and politically charged discussions of education could potentially be in Kahnawake. What I came to learn was that the community is a politically charged one with significant divisions based on political beliefs and religious upbringings⁴. Education and its role in

⁴ This is discussed further in the chapter on the Education Park.

politics are equally charged topics with much emotion involved, as it is understood that education is a major vehicle of Indigenous socialization.

At first, I talked with friends so that I could determine which topics of conversation were being discussed in Kahnawake about education. Once I had established what people were concerned with and what was part of their discussions in regards to education, I conducted semi-structured interviews with school administrators, working from a list of questions and subjects that I wanted to cover to direct what information I was looking for. I then conducted unstructured interviews with teachers, parents, and members of the community at large (Please see appendix 1 for a list of questions I used during my interviews).

The people I spoke to were interviewed based on what position they held in relation to education. It was important to speak to parents because they have a say in what their children learn through the various parent school committees. It was important to interview teachers because they are the ones who teach in the schools. I spoke to administrators because they are in control of what direction education in Kahnawake takes. I interviewed community members at large because they are also supposed to have a say or at least an opinion on the direction education should take.

In the interviews I asked questions in order to elicit information pertaining to peoples' involvement with education in Kahnawake in the past, present, and what they hoped for in the future. I let people express themselves on their own terms, encouraging people to define the content of the interviews, while I directed the subjects and issues we discussed.

I selected my interview questions with the hope that I did not offend those I interviewed. I did not ask people what they thought of fellow community member's responses to events taking place in the community. I took all possible steps to maintain confidentiality of the people I spoke with. I found this to be important, as Kahnawake is a small community where most people know everyone who lives there at least by name if not by relation.

I sought the interviewee's view on the space children were taught in, how much space was allocated, and what it was used for. I asked them if they had any say in these community space allocations.

I spoke with the local newspaper editor of The Eastern Door for his input as I found his reporting of new developments in education as well as his valuable editorials to be crucial to the discussions taking place in the community. I interviewed parents who were directly and indirectly involved with the Kahnawake Combined Schools Committee so that I could understand how they perceived the committee's role in the community. I also spoke with some parents who chose to send their children to schools outside the community so that I could understand how and why they chose to do so.

Conclusion & Summary

The research that was done took place in the community of Kahnawake during an eight-month period between 2002 and 2003. The nature of the research was ethnographic in that the fieldwork was conducted in the community using the methods of library research, participant observation and interviews. In particular I focused on three major events during my fieldwork. The educational park, which was a project that ultimately failed, generated much discussion and dialogue about what was important to community

members about how they envisioned education. The youth conference in 2002 showed how the community participates in education in Kahnawake, and the entrepreneurial skills workshops, showed how educational administrators address the perceived educational needs of the community.

It was through the networks made in the community with friends and acquaintances that this research was made possible. These networks as well as the long-standing relationships I have with people in the community made research and fieldwork in this area accessible.

Chapter 3 History of Indigenous Relations

Introduction

In this chapter I provide a brief overview of the history of Indigenous relations in Canada, with attention given to the community of Kahnawake in the province of Quebec. The focus more specifically is on how people's life in the community of Kahnawake has been reshaped by the relations the community has had historically with Canada. This chapter gives an overview of the social organization prior to colonization and how this has changed over time, to provide some insight into how today's framework of relations between Kahnawake and the Federal government of Canada has come to be. What can be discerned is that over time through the process of colonization there has been a shift in political and social control of the community that has negatively affected the community of Kahnawake.

Village of Kahnawake

The community of Kahnawake is part of the Iroquois Confederacy that is located on the southern shore of the St. Lawrence River, across from the Island of Montreal in the province of Quebec, Canada. The community first settled in this area in 1667 at a Catholic French mission that was called La Prairie (Druke Becker, 1995, Blanchard, 1982, INAC, 2002). The Mohawks who settled there came from the Adirondack area, in what is today known as New York State. The Mohawks called La Prairie, Kahnawake, which means "by the rapids", as the mission was beside the rough section of the St. Lawrence River that had many rapids.

Iroquois Confederacy

The Mohawks of Kahnawake are part of the Iroquois confederacy; a group of clan based nations whose languages derive from the same Iroquoian linguistic root. These nations came together for military, political and economic purposes of allegiance in the fifteenth to sixteenth century¹ (York and Pindera, 1992: 144). The nations came together under the guidance of a man named Deganawida, who envisioned that the then-warring nations would begin working together instead of against each other. At the time, the confederacy was made up of five nations:² the Mohawks, the Onondagagas, the Senecas, the Cayugas and the Oneidas.

Deganawida brought the warring nations together as a confederacy by showing them that together they could achieve peace with one another and power over other Indigenous nations they were then at war with. He did this by mediating and negotiating between the nations and the fruits of this process have been passed down orally in the confederacy as a living contract known as the Kayanerakowa or the Great Law of Peace (Blanchard, 1982: 78).

The Kayanerakowa is a collection of laws that came from Deganawida, a Huron man who came to live with the Mohawk peoples after being shunned from his own community. He is thought of as being a messenger of the creator named Okwiraseh who wanted the fighting amongst the Iroquois people to stop.

In the Iroquoian story of the creation of the Kayanerakowa, Deganawida meets with Hiawatha, an Onondaga from another village. Together Deganawida and Hiawatha

¹ There are discrepancies as to when the confederacy was founded. The Iroquois were an oral based culture prior to contact with the Europeans. Though an exact date is not available, estimations place it's conception in the fifteenth to sixteenth century.

² The Tuscaroras joined the confederacy in 1713.

bring to each of the five nations the idea of the Great Law of Peace. Once each nation accepted the Great Law, Deganawida gave the laws to the nations and instructed them on how to organize the confederacy. It is said that this was done under the Great Tree of Peace. The tree was uprooted, and the weapons were thrown into the hole with the tree re-rooted over top (York and Pindera, 1992: 147).

Deganawida helped the confederacy organize itself in a way that was reflective of their collective interests. Skills, population, hereditary practices, kinship patterns, village and hunting territories, and their relations with one another were all factors that were considered in the creation of the *Kayanerakowa*, so that it could be applicable to the different nations. The organization of the confederacy is in its abstract form a larger replica of the organization that takes place within each nation, which is a replica of what takes place within each village, which is a replica of what takes place within each clan. Therefore, relations with one another are replicated at each level of interaction.

Families in the confederacy were organized into matrilineal and matrilocal clans (Druke Becker, 1995: 326), meaning that more often than not residency and inheritance was through the maternal mother's ancestral line. The Iroquois people subsisted on farming, essentially a female practice, and hunting and trading, a male practice. They lived in extended family dwellings known as longhouses, in villages with adjacent farmland that they cultivated for periods of ten years. After approximately ten years, when the land was no longer suitable for farming, the Mohawks would move the village to another area within their territory where the land was more fertile for farming (Morgan, 1993[1851]: 60).

Hunting and trade took men away from the villages for extended periods throughout the year, meaning that elders, women and children normally inhabited the village. The organization of village life and decision making reflected this living pattern, with decisions being made by the elders of each clan represented in the village in a council of the women and the men.

When men were away from the village women were held responsible for the day-to-day well being of village. Clan mothers and younger women were responsible for perpetuating the community through child rearing, farming and teaching the younger generation. Clan mothers were women who had passed childbearing age, and had proven to be wise teachers of the ways of the people. Younger women still in their child rearing stage concentrated on raising children and tending to the crops.

Another responsibility of the clan mothers was selecting and raising upcoming sachems or peace leaders. Traditionally, sachems inherited their status matrilineally. The clan mothers selected the 'chief to be' from the clan that had inherited the chief title (sachem). They would raise the chiefs to be master orators and to represent each of their respective clans and collectively the village at the nation level and in turn at the confederacy level. The clan mother of the clan line held the sachemships of her clan until such time as the sachemship was ready to be inherited. When the sachem chief died or was removed the clan held the sachemship until such time as a new candidate for chief was selected to inherit it. Merit was also an important determining factor in selecting a candidate to replace a chief who had died. Once this happened the dead chief would be

condoled, and the names of the founding chiefs of the confederacy would be preserved as sachems with each generation³ (Morgan 1993[1851]: 84-88).

The confederacy is made up of 50 sachems that are distributed between the five nations. Each sachem held equal power to the other sachems in the confederacy, but the sachems were unequally distributed amongst the nations. The sachems retained the original titles for each tribe as well as the knowledge of which clan the individual holder is from as well. The purpose of their council was to oversee the transactions of the whole confederacy such as trade, alliances, and negotiating peace and war (Morgan, 1993[1851]: 62-67).

The village council was a group of local chiefs who met to discuss and decide upon the various needs of the community. The chiefs of the clans of one village could also meet in council, but they were considered a lesser class of rulers as opposed to the sachems of the confederacy. Inasmuch as they controlled much of what took place at the local level, the village chiefs originally did not have much influence with the confederacy until much later in the history of the confederacy with the influx of settlers (Morgan, 1993 [1851]: 84-88).

It has been recently posited that the clan mothers directed these local councils indirectly because they chose and trained the men who became chiefs. It is thought that they also directly controlled the council, as it was the clan mothers who informed the male chiefs of what the clan's decisions were on issues that were raised. With consensus,

³ It should be noted that Morgan's account of political organization among the Iroquois continues to be debated, contested, and interpreted both within the academy and within Iroquois communities. Thus my account here does not pretend to be definitive and can only point to the complexity of the social and political organization.

discussions were continuous within each clan until a unanimous decision was made. The clan mother, on behalf of the clan, then brought the decision to the council, whose position it was to enforce the decision (Brown, 1970: 153, Druke Becker, 1995: 334, Tooker, 1984: 113). Debates on the role of Iroquois women in decision-making have come to the forefront since the 1970's when Iroquois women began to take part in the reinterpretation of Indigenous history in Canada. The debate is complex, and has yet to be fully realized. It is also an example of how decolonization of the mind is taking place with the rewriting of history. Once the men could no longer hunt because of age or other physical barriers, they remained in the villages taking their place in the local council, whether it was as sachem or as a clan elder. Council would meet to implement decisions and would involve those people that the decision affected. If needed, a decision from a local council could be brought to a national council, which in turn could be brought to the confederacy level, showing how interactions between people were replicated and represented at each level of decision-making. Council was a communal activity in that the whole village participated. The purpose of these meetings was to arbitrate internal disputes and establish alliances based on a system of consensus decision-making (Druke Becker, 1995: 326). Council usually took place in the longhouses or in a clearing in the village, with discussions and decisions being made over a fire, with women sitting on one side of the fire and men on the other. People would sit with their families, meaning that they were sitting with their clan.

The Mohawk community of Kahnawake has three main clans; Turtle, Wolf and Bear. The clan's people would sit and discuss amongst themselves how they collectively felt about issues that were being raised in the council. Clan mothers and sachems would

speak and decisions would be made collectively. This system of decision-making is a consensus-based system (York and Pindera, 1992: 148, Alfred, 1995: 36), as it democratically allows all members to have say in the decision being made.

One of the functions of the Kayanerakowa was to pass on this form of organization to upcoming generations, to ensure that the unions that had been made within the confederacy continued into the future. As a system of laws that guide the organization of the confederacy, the Kayanerakowa outlined the way that the nations should communicate with one another right down to how individuals should interact with one another; peacefully, remembering their power together, and in a righteous manner.

The longhouse became a symbol of the confederacy. The practice of lighting a fire in the longhouse was symbolic of bringing light to an open discussion and provided warmth to all the people present. The longhouse as a dwelling of multiple families living together under one roof showed that living harmoniously was possible. In this way, the Iroquois confederacy was a clearly established social and political organization that existed prior to the arrival of Europeans in Canada and the United States.

Settling Canada

When European explorers and traders first arrived in what they called the New World, the relations that prevailed between them and the Indigenous peoples was based on an acknowledgment of nationhood from both parties. The explorers needed the help of the Indigenous people in order to survive in the harsh North American climate that had lush summers and severe winters. The traders needed the Indigenous people for their knowledge of the land and its resources.

The Indigenous peoples began to align themselves along lines of trade with the different European trading nations. However, alliances that were created started to go beyond European trade interests and began taking on new meaning for wars about resource acquisitions that were already taking place between different Indigenous nations as well as European nations. By the 1640's, the British and the French were in a locked in battle over which country would take control of North America's commercial resources. Different Indigenous Nations often sided with one country over the other, providing them with strategic information and/or soldiers for battle. In the end by 1763, Britain won and North Eastern North America became a British colony answerable to the British government (Miller, 1991: 62).

European missionaries of the Catholic and later the Protestant faith came to the New World with the hopes of spreading Christianity (Druke Becker, 1995: 334, Blanchard, 1982: 115). Many Indigenous people began to accept the doctrines of Christianity seeing parallels between Indigenous spirituality and Christian religion, in that they shared similar understandings of the creation of the world as it was known, and in the idea of a savior showing the people the way were similar. Missionaries would live in the villages or would set up missions with the purpose of the religious conversion of Indigenous people.

The presence of the missionaries and the work they were doing caused strife between Indigenous people who had not converted to Christianity and those who had. In some instances, the new religion divided families. With regards to the Mohawk people, those who accepted Christianity into their life, felt at odds with the rest of the Confederacy. Inasmuch as they were still part of the organization of the Confederacy,

their conversion to Christianity meant that they no longer felt accepted in the everyday life of the village. The Christian Mohawks decided that they should leave their respective villages, and set up a Christian Mohawk community. They set up their community at a mission on the St. Lawrence in their territory called La Prairie. These are the original Mohawk settlers of Kahnawake, the community where I conducted the fieldwork.

Colonizing Canada

Once the British had established themselves in the New World, they began organizing themselves in line with the British practices of governance⁴. Political parties were created, laws were written, treaties with Indigenous people were created and signed ceding rights to lands and resources, and a parliamentary system was implemented for purposes of governance. The government created a simplified and general category “Indian” to control the Indigenous population indigenous to Canada.

The newly formed Canadian government considered the Indigenous population of their new territory as a defeated backward people who would die off or be assimilated if they survived (Fleras and Elliott, 1992: 41). At first the government put Indigenous people under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Trade, and then under the jurisdiction of the military. In the late 1800’s, the government created a policy and corresponding department to assume responsibility and address how relations with Indigenous people were to be formalized. The policy created was called the Indian Act (1876) and the department was called the Department of Indian Affairs⁵. The Indian Act first written in

⁴ The Royal Proclamation of 1763 established that Canada was under the jurisdiction of the British Crown, and that any dealings with Indigenous people had to go through the British government’s delegate in Canada.

⁵ The Department of Indian Affairs later became known as the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

1876, and considerably revised in 1951 and in 1982, outlined the legal provisions for every aspect of Indigenous life in Canada for those who had signed treaties with the government⁶ (INAC, 2002). It designated land for Indigenous people to live on known as reservations. On each reservation a monitor was placed known as an Indian agent who would insure that life went according to what the federal government had provisioned for, such as hunting and fishing rights, political organization and education as outlined below. Indian Agents were not-Indigenous people, rather they were Caucasian men who worked for the Department of Indian Affairs and were stationed at Indian reservations across Canada.

On each reservation, a band council was set up that was to act as the voice of the Indigenous people. The band council was made up of male chiefs who were elected to the position according to the election regulations set up by the Department of Indian Affairs⁷. If any issues were to be raised, such as a need for provisions or materials, the band chief was expected to bring the concern to the Indian Agent. The agent would then make a decision, or bring the issue to the Department of Indian Affairs if he so chose, for the rendering of a decision.

This type of election procedure was against Indigenous people's traditional ways of nominating and electing chiefs. Such a universal system betrayed the social organization of Indigenous people in several important ways. For example, in the Iroquois confederacy, Iroquois women were no longer allowed to participate, effectively removing them from political life. The traditional Iroquois succession process where women elders used to participate in nominating chiefs to sachems was eliminated.

⁶ The Act also applies in areas where treaties were not signed eg. Yukon.

⁷ The rules governing band council elections are listed in the Indian Act.

Each nation traditionally had its own style of governance at times varying considerably from nation to nation across North America. This meant that the Department of Indian Affairs displaced all of the different ways Indigenous peoples governed themselves with a unified system that was created to oppress them. Potentially this system could also work to bring the different nations together against the federal government, and much later on in the history of Indigenous political relations, the creation of the Assembly of First Nations is an example of this. The Assembly of First Nations⁸ is a national association that brings together different nations from across Canada that works as lobby group with the Canadian government for Indigenous Peoples rights in Canada.

With the government's goal of assimilation, came the recognition that Indigenous practices and beliefs had little place in the newly forming Canadian social landscape (York and Pindera, 1992: 121). Many Indigenous cultural practices were considered illegal. For the Iroquois Confederacy, and any nation within, this meant that following the tenets of the Kayanerakowa were now considered illegal. For example, in 1871 when the Department of Indian Affairs began organizing elections on the reserve; the Mohawks of Kahnawake refused along with their sister communities of Akwesasne, Tyendinega, and Kahnasatake to participate. Mohawks from all three communities sent petitions to the Canadian government emphasizing how the Department of Indian Affairs was going against previously established agreements made between them and the British crown. The response of the Department of Indian Affairs was to send police officers to Akwesasne to force an election. The Mohawks still refused, so the Department of Indian Affairs asked for the Canadian army to be sent in. A standoff at a schoolhouse in Akwesasne ensued,

⁸ The predecessor of the Assembly of Indigenous was the National Indian Brotherhood

with the end result of one Mohawk man being shot to death, and a number of Mohawk men being arrested. After these men were detained for approximately a year, a small group of Mohawks from the community were persuaded to hold a band council election (York and Pindera, 1992: 159-161). This threw the previous system of governance into disarray.

Through the British North America Act of 1867 Indigenous people were now considered part of Canada, and the people were deemed wards of the state. The government set out provisions for how Indigenous people to be educated. Day schools were set up privately for Canadian children by the Christian churches, so the Government followed suit and contracted the churches to educate Indigenous people in separate schools. The Churches set up Residential schools across the country that would have Indigenous students live in the school ten months of the year, going home to the reservations for the summer months.

Attendance in the Residential schools was mandatory, and parents could be fined or imprisoned if their children did not attend. Often Indigenous children were physically removed from their homes by the Indian agents and sent to the Residential schools. The belief held by the Department of Indian Affairs was that Indian children should be removed from the community by the time they were five years old so that they could assimilate easily into Canadian culture.

This new system was devastating to the Indigenous population in Canada (Fleras and Elliott, 1992: 42). Parents were left without their children. The people had also been confined to small reserves, thereby making it difficult to hunt and fish. The land they were relegated to was not appropriate for farming and they were not allowed to mine any

resources that might be present on the reservations⁹. It was illegal to practice their spirituality or politically organize and their children were removed for the better part of the year. In essence, they became dependent on the Canadian government for their survival.

In the Residential schools, children were often severely punished for showing any sign of being Indigenous (Barman, 1996: 280-281, Miller, 1989: 112). They were not allowed to wear traditional clothing or jewelry. Their hair was cut short. They wore numbered uniforms and they were not allowed to speak their Indigenous languages. Many children were physically and sexually abused in the Residential schools, and many students experienced emotional and psychological abuse. (Barman, 1996:295)

Today over 5000 lawsuits has been filed against the churches and federal government for these abuses¹⁰ (IRSRC, 2005). The end result is that there are generations of Indigenous people now over 50 years of age in Canada that have been severely marked and traumatized by their early educational experiences at the Residential schools, making the collective Indigenous experience in Canada very painful, full of anger and resentment. The Residential schools did not successfully assimilate Indigenous people; it instead disenfranchised them from the rest of Canada.

In Kahnawake, the only option for children's education was at a residential school set up in Spanish, Ontario, until 1915. At this time the Nun's of St. Anne, a Catholic

⁹ Section 93 of the Indian Act states that minerals, stones, sand and gravel, clay or soil may not be removed from the reservation.

¹⁰ The Protestant and Catholic Churches of Canada have both formally apologized to the Indigenous people of Canada for the abuses that took place in the Residential schools thereby taking some of the responsibility for what happened.

convent from the United States, set up an English day school on the reserve so that children could attend school and live at home if their parents so chose.

Village life continued on for the Mohawks, with cash earned from male wage work in the steel industry slowly replacing hunting and agriculture (Arbuthnot, 1984: 35, Blanchard, 1982: 277). The men would migrate to work building high rises and bridges in major northeastern Canadian and American cities. The women continued some subsistence farming and traded their beadwork in Montreal, but the land available for farming was becoming scarce. The allotted land for the reserve was becoming smaller as the government sold off portions of it to people moving closer to the island of Montreal, a bustling metropolis that attracted many people.

Practicing the Kayanerakowa continued but quietly, without the knowledge of the Indian agent placed in Kahnawake. In order for the Kayanerakowa to be followed, what was once a fluid oral tradition now needed to be solidified with an actual location to practice the tenets and a written record of what the tenets were. Small single-family dwellings were replacing the longhouses that Mohawks once lived in. The longhouse was becoming a place where only official meetings happened. The longhouse had been transformed into a place of traditional spirituality and people who continued to practice the traditional tenets of the Kayanerakowa became known as traditionalists or longhouse people (Alfred, 1995: 62).

The Band council operated in the community of Kahnawake with recognition of their figurehead authority coming from the Federal government, and not necessarily from the community. The community became divided, between the people who followed the band council and the people who believed in the traditional ways of the longhouse. This

division continues even today to affect the daily lives of community members in decisions they need to make such as decisions about where their children should go to school, whether or not to participate in discussions initiated by the band council or whether or not to vote in any band council election or referendum.

Today the divisions in the community of Kahnawake affect education in that there is a desire to have Mohawk content in the curriculum. People who consider themselves “of the longhouse” are more likely to send their children to schools, which provide this curriculum such as the Indian Way elementary school, a school that is not under the jurisdiction of the Kahnawake Combined Schools Committee¹¹. People who support the band council are more likely to send their children to a band run school like Kateri School or Karonhianhnha School or to a non-Mohawk school outside of the community.

This division also affects political participation as it is only those community members who support the band council, who vote or participate in discussions initiated by the band council, that have a say in what is implemented in the community. Because this is still thought of as a foreign system, only a few people participate. For example, in a town meeting that I attended about community membership, only 50 people were in attendance out of an eligible voting population of 7065 (INAC, 2001). Inasmuch as this 14% participation rate shows a low level of participation in general, it also shows that only those who believe that the band council is capable of making decisions with their input, attended.

In this way, these divisions can be seen as part of the struggle the community faces in regaining control not only of the education of their youth but of their community

¹¹ The Kahnawake Combined Schools Committee will be discussed further in the chapter on the History of Indigenous education.

as well. These divisions are based on the role colonization played in the community, and how influencing divisions between people was beneficial to the government's goal of assimilating the Indigenous population into dominant Canadian society. In the process of decolonization, these divisions need to be recognized as part of a cultural dialogue with the purpose of bringing the community together rather than supporting divisions that hinder community growth.

Conclusion and Summary

In this chapter I have shown how the Mohawk community of Kahnawake has gone from being part of the Iroquois Confederacy, and recognized by the colonists as such, to being considered wards of the Canadian State. By laying claim to their natural resources, restricting their use of the land, forcing them into a foreign way of socially organizing themselves, and forcibly attempting to assimilate them into a restrictive way of learning, the Canadian federal government structured a negative relationship with the Indigenous population in Canada.

When the community of Kahnawake was established in 1667, the Mohawks had converted to Christianity but they still maintained strong ties with the Iroquois confederacy. The perception held by both the community and the settlers was that the relationship was nation to nation. Each nation had its own way of socially and politically organizing themselves and neither interfered with these processes.

During the 1860's this relationship began to change in that settlers began to see themselves as colonizers, with exclusive rights to land and resources that were once shared between the different Indigenous nations and the settlers. Colonizers set up

governing structures to make these perceptions a reality. Indigenous people were treated in this new structure as being in need of assimilation into the newly formed Canada.

The attempt to assimilate Indigenous peoples was not fully fulfilled, and communities such as Kahnawake maintained the basic traditional forms of organizing themselves such as the Kayanerakowa. When the community of Kahnawake began the process of taking control of their educational institutions, these basic traditional forms of organizing informed this process.

In the next chapter the history of Indigenous education is discussed more in depth. I will highlight the changes that have taken place to the educational institutions in Kahnawake, as well as briefly give background information to how education in the community has been shaped.

Chapter 4 History of Indigenous Education

Introduction

The education and socialization of youth has been a main focus of the Indigenous people of Canada since the closing of Residential schools in the 1950's. The Federal government agreed to open dialogue concerning Indigenous people acquiring control of education in the 1970's after a political organization called the National Indian Brotherhood¹ published a document called "Indian Control of Indian Education". Since then, the government and Indigenous people have covertly and overtly argued over what control means. At the forefront of this dispute remains the Indigenous people's desire to decolonize their community by resisting assimilation and protecting and promoting their cultural heritage.

In this chapter I provide an overview of how education has changed in Kahnawake historically. What becomes evident is the effect the shifting of control over education has had on the direction education is taking in present day Kahnawake.

Traditional Education in Kahnawake

Historically, education in the community of Kahnawake had been delivered informally. Children experienced what they learned when they needed to; applying the knowledge they gained as they saw fit. There was no set place or time to learn. In the evening around the fire in the longhouses, any structured teachings that took place were given by clan elders who would use story telling as a method of instruction. The stories taught children about the history and culture of the Mohawk people. The purpose of education was to encourage a child to develop into a productive member of the village

¹ The National Indian Brotherhood changed its name to The Assembly of First Nations to be more inclusive in the 1980's.

and the Mohawk nation (Blanchard, 1980: 187-200). Children often derived their knowledge from the informal teachings elders gave as the children played or helped the members of their kin work in the village.

When missionaries first arrived, they built missions that became places of worship and learning. Often, Indigenous elders would send a few children to the missionaries for instruction in an attempt to gain an understanding of the settlers. These students would grow up to be intermediaries between the Indigenous people and settlers, offering insight to both parties as means of understanding. In the 1700's, Indigenous nations recognized the value of European technology. They bartered the instruction of this technology by the missionaries in exchange for alliances and other resources the Indigenous people possessed (Longboat, 1986: 26-27). Early missionary schools went beyond teaching basic reading and writing skills. This type of trade existed until the time the British officially established the colony known as Canada.

Colonial Education

The Indian Act came into effect in 1876. With colonization well under way, the education of the Indigenous population became the sole jurisdiction of the federal government. The government set out exacting the provisions of formal education for the Indigenous people. The act clearly stipulated that Indigenous education was mandatory and to be controlled by a federally contracted agency. Catholic and Protestant ministries set up Residential schools, and federal day schools began to appear on some reservations. The goal of the Canadian government, through the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA), was make use of education to assimilate the Indigenous population into Canadian society.

Education, they reasoned, was an effective method of teaching Indigenous children how to be Canadian (Miller, 1989: 100, Perley, 1993: 122).

In 1905, a few Catholic lay people established a French school on the Kahnawake reservation. It was called O'tonwakainke (Beauvais, 1985: 83). In 1915, the sisters of St. Anne took over the school, providing primary education in English to community members as well as training some Mohawk women to teach. Formal education ceased at grade eight. Women continued their education informally with their mothers at home. Boys were taught construction and girls were taught domestic skills. This was considered to be an alternative to sending children away to the Residential schools.

The conversion of Indigenous children to Christianity was the purpose of the education offered by the church, as well, to teach basic reading, writing and arithmetic, and more importantly, assimilate Indigenous people into Euro-Canadian culture (Arbuthnot, 1984: 39, Miller, 1989: 44, 112). Students were not permitted to speak their Indigenous language, dress in Indigenous clothing, and were not allowed to make any inference to being Indigenous people. These rules were applicable on the reservations as well as in public life, forcing them to hide their Indigenous identity. The missionaries and education authorities believed that being indigenous as something to be ashamed of, which was proportional to the government's goal to assimilate the Indigenous population as Canadians.

However, the goal of assimilating Indigenous people into Euro-Canadian culture through education was not successful. Though the experiences and memories of the Residential schools might have damaged the self-confidence of many Indigenous people, they still identify with what it means to be Indigenous. Many victims of Residential

schools have turned to their culture for healing and comfort. However, there are an equally great number of Indigenous people who have turned to drugs and alcohol for comfort (Wilson and Morrison, 1995: 619-620, Battiste and Henderson, 2000: 91).

Because these schools punished students for being Indigenous, many students suppressed their basic cultural values, such as the use of their language, how to have healthy relationships, and how to raise children (Longboat, 1986: 32). In this way Indigenous knowledge was marginalized. The knowledge of the dominant society was forced onto Indigenous people as the only worldview from which to draw from. Because of this, not only those who attended Residential schools were affected, but also their children, and more often than not, their children's children. One of my interviewees shared some of her memories of the Residential school she attended where a nun sexually assaulted her. She lived at the Residential school until she was nine and was transferred to a federal day school in the community. She expressed how school was always boring to her and that she could not wait for it to end. She had tried to suppress her early experiences but finally she felt she had to deal with what she went through in the schools, if she was to move on with her life. She then became a teacher (Ryan, notes, 2002).

In the 1940's the DIA approved the creation of additional federal day schools on reservations. In the community of Kahnawake, Kateri School opened its doors to children from kindergarten to grade three, and Karonhianonhnha School for grades four to six. With lack of funding from DIA being cited as the major contributing factor, several church dioceses began shutting down schools.

During this time, provinces within Canada had already established jurisdiction in education, and the DIA was attempting to transfer fiduciary responsibilities of Indigenous

affairs to the provinces, including education. The provinces were reluctant to take over this relationship, agreeing only to tuition cost transfers between the DIA and provincial school boards to help pay for Indigenous students attending provincial schools. For Mohawks in Kahnawake, primary schools were to be directly under the jurisdiction of DIA and secondary schools were still to be under the jurisdiction of the church at the Residential school in Spanish, Ontario. After 1958, students could attend provincial secondary schools in nearby Montreal and Chateauguay.

The community of Kahnawake approved of the fact that their youth were going to be educated closer to the community. Although, there was still a degree of skepticism as to whether or not the students were going to get a better education. The community was concerned that the youth were not learning anything about their culture or their language. Instead, learning was limited to the Canadian and Quebec culture.

Provincial Education

In the late 1960's tuition fee transfer agreements were negotiated between the federal government and individual school boards in various provinces. The agreements established transfer payments to allow for Indigenous students to be educated in provincially administered schools. The option to attend private schools run by religious institutions still existed under the same tuition transfers. This change in policy was affected by the changes implemented in jurisdiction over education between the federal and provincial governments. It was during this time that the DIA changed its name to reflect new developments in the North. The government expanded the reaches of the department, calling it the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND).

Changes were also occurring in Kahnawake, where Mohawks began organizing their criticism of government control of education. The Kahnawake Combined Schools Committee (KCSC) was formed in 1968, to stay abreast of the changes on how their children were educated and by whom (Arbuthnot, 1984: 45, Blanchard, 1982: 462-463). A group of teachers and parents created the committee as a reaction to decisions being made on their behalf during the negotiations between DIAND and the Quebec provincial government. This committee became the recognized body that negotiated on Kahnawake's behalf with DIAND and the various school boards. At first they were responsible for the delivery of educational services and programs, and later, the dispensing of the tuition transfers to the school boards where Mohawk students from Kahnawake were registered on behalf of DIAND.

The committee is made up of Mohawk parents of school age children, representing all of the schools in Kahnawake. The control given to the KCSC not only encompasses the curriculums in Kahnawake schools, but also includes jurisdiction over what Mohawk children are being taught in schools outside of the community. In 1970, Mohawk parents under the guidance of the KCSC removed Mohawk students from one of the provincial secondary schools, the Howard S. Billings high school in Chateaugay, just outside Kahnawake. The removal was an attempt to force the school board to meet demands for culturally sensitive courses for Mohawk students. The pressure tactic worked, and by 1971 Billings introduced two Mohawk based courses; one called Indian studies, and the other Mohawk language studies.

Thus, the KCSC became an administrative body charged with monitoring educational developments and continues to be the only board in charge of education in

Kahnawake. By challenging DIAND's ability to provide culturally sensitive education to Mohawk children, the KCSC was able to assume the administration of education in Kahnawake.

The Emergence of Survival School

In 1976, the province of Quebec passed a language law, Bill 101, changing the official language of the province to French instead of English and French (Arbuthnot, 1984: 51, Blanchard, 1980: 473). This meant that all persons immigrating to Quebec were to be educated in French instead of English, unless it could be established that at least one parent was educated in English in Quebec. The purpose of this legislation was to prepare the province for the proposed separation of Quebec from Canada. Under this new legislation, Indigenous people's unique status was not considered, and they were required to apply for a provincial government certificate in order to acquire the right to be educated in English. According to article 73 of Bill 101, Indian reservations were not subject to the act, so at first Indigenous peoples in Quebec did not react strongly to the new legislation. When it became clear that the government was interpreting the article to mean that only Indigenous students attending schools on reservations were not subject to the Bill, and that this consideration did not extend to Indigenous students attending schools outside reservations, Indigenous communities across Quebec began to protest. They interpreted this to mean that the government was implying that indigenous people were only indigenous on reservations (Blanchard, 1980: 359-360).

The Mohawk community of Kahnawake had been an English speaking community since the early 1900's when the Sisters of Ste. Anne took over the school in the community from the French. For purposes of trade in Montreal, the community took

on English and stopped using French, as it was no longer relevant for them when dealing with neighboring communities that were predominantly English.

The Mohawks of Kahnawake responded to the legislation in 1978 by removing all Mohawk students from Billings high school and marched back to Kahnawake in a televised protest under the guidance of the KCSC (Arbuthnot, 1984: 52-53). Within a few days, a makeshift school was established with classrooms all over the community with parents and other community members volunteering as teachers. Soon after, DIAND began transferring funds to pay for the building of a school, curriculum development and facilities to centralize the creation of educational materials within the community. Many of the volunteer teachers were hired permanently as teachers or as administrative staff.

The new school was aptly named Kahnawake Survival School. The school's unique governing style reintroduced traditional philosophies in education. The school's curriculum, mission, staff and students were part of a community wide effort to control the direction of education in Kahnawake.

The school's infrastructure is campus based; classes are held in a number of buildings. Students physically leave each class to attend the next one, changing environments for each subject. The logic of the school is to provide an avenue for traditional Mohawk culture to be encouraged and incorporated into the everyday experiences of its students. For example, the student council at Survival school imitates the council held in the Longhouse.

The pedagogy of the school is student centered, reflected in their small student to teacher ratio. The focus is on ways to reintroduce traditional teaching and learning in the modern day classroom. The curricula developed for the school is produced within the

community and is directed towards the integration of traditional Mohawk ideas in modern day situations. For example, the social studies class examines issues that the community is presently dealing with and provides a forum for students to voice their opinions. The point of the exercise is to assist students in developing a constructive means of voicing their opinions of these issues, by utilizing their individual talents.

In the fall of 2002, I observed one such exercise in a classroom at Survival School. The class was assigned a negotiation exercise. Half of the group represented the federal government, while the other half represented the community. The focus of the negotiation was a land claim in the Seigneurie de St. Louis, in which the government recognized a claim to lands that have since become fully settled communities adjacent Kahnawake. The point of the exercise was to teach the students how to negotiate the rights to this land (Ryan, notes, 2002).

The KCSC has continued on the path of administering Mohawk education for the community by backing a number of educational initiatives, which have taken place in Kahnawake schools. The first was the creation of a Mohawk language immersion program, beginning in 1985 at the Karonhianhnha School. The goal of the program was to create fluency in young speakers and ultimately increase the number of Mohawk speakers overall. There were very few speakers of the Mohawk language at this time, and efforts to record the language in a written form were formally underway. An initiative by Kateri and Karonhianhnha elementary schools saw the augmentation of the attainment level, bringing both schools to full elementary school status with grades from kindergarten to six.

Today there are 1772 school age children in Kahnawake, eligible for enrollment in elementary or secondary schools. There are a total of 794 students currently registered in schools in the community (INAC, 2002). There are five schools in operation; Kateri, Karonhianonhnha, Survival, Kahnawake Middle school, Indian Way, and Step by Step nursery/family center. Each school has an in-school parent teacher committee, which has representatives on the KCSC, ensuring that all parents with school age children have a say in the education their children receive.

Kateri School was established as a Catholic federal day school in 1949. Jurisdiction over the school was transferred from DIAND to the Mohawk Council of Kahnawake (MCK), or commonly referred to as the Band council, in 1988. The school became non-denominational. There are currently 305 students attending this elementary school (The Eastern Door, 2004), which offers primary education in English from kindergarten to grade six. The school offers Mohawk, as well as French language instruction, religious instruction in Catholicism or Protestantism, and Mohawk cultural instruction.

The school is located in the heart of the community, in the older village. It is housed in a building constructed in 1949. It is not equipped with a gymnasium or a cafeteria, and requires some décor changes. However, there are large classrooms, and large hallways, but the space cannot be adequately utilized because of the building's design.

Karonhianonhnha School was established in 1964 as a Protestant federal day school. Like Kateri School, it became a band run school in 1988, when jurisdiction was transferred to the MCK. The school then became non-denominational. There are

currently 201 students attending this elementary school (The Eastern Door, 2004), which offers primary instruction from kindergarten to grade six in English. Mohawk language instruction is also available in an immersion program from kindergarten to grade six.

Karonhianonhnha School is located on one of the main roads in the community of Kahnawake, and it's building spacious. However, the school is in poor condition and in desperate need of renovations. Because of its central location and large land allotment, the school's site was the location for the proposed Education Park. The education park will be discussed further in chapter five, Community Debates on the Education Park Project.

Step-by-Step Child and Family Center was established as a pre-school in 1949 by a number of parents who were concerned by the absence of child care facilities in the community. There are currently 130 students attending the center (The Eastern Door, 2004) registered in the day care program, general and specialized learning programs, or the junior kindergarten program. Jurisdiction over the center has always rested with the MCK.

The school is located in the heart of the community. It is housed in a building constructed in 1949. It is small building that does not adequately meet the needs of the center. There are too many students and not enough space. There is no room for a library, so books and other written material are stored in a trailer located on the center's site.

Survival School was established as a Mohawk secondary school in 1978. Jurisdiction over the school has always rested with the MCK. The creation of the school was intended meet the educational community needs of Mohawk language instruction and Mohawk cultural instruction. The school offers English, French, and Mohawk

language instruction, and is divided into a middle school for grades seven and eight, and high school for grades nine through eleven.

There are currently 210 students attending Survival School (Ryan, 2002, notes). Its design is a campus setting with classrooms arranged in different buildings on site. The school is located on the community's border, making transportation a necessary consideration when considering accessibility. These issues encapsulate a desire to relocate the school to a more central location in the community.

The Debate of Community control of Education

Despite the above figures and the development of an education system in Kahnawake, many parents still choose to send their children to provincial schools and private schools in Montreal (INAC, 2002). More than half of the eligible secondary students are schooled outside of the community, and approximately one quarter (25%) of the eligible elementary students are schooled outside of the community.

Reasons given for this discrepancy relate with the quality of education and the relevance of the curriculum provided in Kahnawake in light of the community's relations with the province of Quebec. There is concern that students will not be employable outside the community and that the province will not recognize their degrees. In one instance, an alumna of Survival School had her high school French certificate refused when she applied for her nursing license. The government argued that the French offered at Survival School was not at a high enough level to guarantee the bilingualism that is needed to work in Quebec hospitals. This has raised the question in the community of whether or not the French offered at Survival School is enough for students to be able to

be employed outside of the community in the province of Quebec. (Ryan, notes, 2002)
This issue will be discussed further in chapter five.

Kahnawake parents are concerned that certain subjects are not available to students in Kahnawake schools. Specialized programs such as music or drama are not offered in Kahnawake. Students wishing to pursue such programs would have to be educated outside of the community. This would mean that the funding from DIAND earmarked for the education of Mohawk students would flow outside the community to the various external school boards. Initiatives have been developed to introduce subjects that are of interest to students and are taking place in workshop formats so that student interest can be gauged. Some of these initiatives will be examined in chapter six and seven, The Youth Conference and Entrepreneurial Skills Workshops respectively.

It is difficult to respond fiscally to calls for changes in the quality of education and quantity of programs offered in Kahnawake with the current transfer agreement that exists between the community and DIAND. If Kahnawake wants to change or add more programs, they require DIAND's approval. If given fiscal control, the community would have an easier time integrating new programs.

Conclusion and Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the education of youth in Kahnawake. One can divide the history of this education by the types of schools created for this purpose. They were the missionary schools, the Residential schools, provincial schools, and the community controlled schools. Each type of school was designed with a specific goal, control over the education of Indigenous youth.

Similar to the history of Indigenous relations, Indigenous education has been subjected to the same types control mechanisms. A genuine attempt to create an equal relationship by sending Indigenous children to missionary schools with the hopes of gaining a better understanding about the ways of the settlers became an unequal relationship subject to the Federal government's assimilationist policies with the establishment of Residential schools. Inasmuch as the provincial school system was not as overtly assimilationist with regards to its Indigenous students, it was covertly so, in not recognizing their learning needs. Today, community controlled schooling attempts to reintroduce Indigenous cultures and languages to Indigenous students. In the community of Kahnawake this is happening in schools such as Survival School.

Prior to the arrival of settlers in Canada, traditional schooling of Indigenous people as it was understood and practiced, was an informal process based on the experiences and information the student was seeking at that point in his/her life. Colonial education was the opposite of this, as students were forced into a formal school system, based on the notion that Indigenous children should be assimilated into the mainstream of Canadian society.

Provincial education remains a formal system, but the education provided has become more standardized. Once community members from Kahnawake took control of the education of Kahnawake students, the formality of a structured system had to be retained. However, efforts were made to integrate more traditional pedagogical methods into the curriculum. Despite this turn around, the majority of parents are still not willing to send their children to schools in Kahnawake, as can be seen in the small number of

children attending Kahnawake schools. This is a reflection of the belief that Kahnawake schools are not providing programs that parents want for their children.

The next chapter of this thesis will examine some of the issues that the community of Kahnawake is facing as they continue to exercise control over their education. I have attempted to understand how the community's perceptions of this control are reflected in the community, as well as how these translate into community curriculum choices.

While I was in the community of Kahnawake, three events took place that influenced my attempts to understand community control of education. The first event was a proposed education park project, which was supposed to bring three separate school facilities together onto one site. The debates that ensued about this project and what the Education Park would do to schooling in the community, gave me an understanding of the difference between perception surrounding control, and actual control. In the next chapter, I will be discussing the education park project debates in the hopes of revealing how these debates play an important role in understanding the fight for community control of education.

Chapter 5 Community Debates on the Education Park Project

Introduction

As outlined in previous chapters, the history of Indigenous relations with the Canadian government and Indigenous education has changed, though not always amicably and not to the satisfaction of either side. How education is regarded and discussed in the community is affected by a history of mistrust of the Canadian government. This has considerable consequences on the decisions Indigenous people make and how they assess government proposals.

In this chapter, I will be discussing an educational project initiated in Kahnawake in 1999. The Education Park project was designed to meet the growing needs of educational facilities in Kahnawake. The project was designed to bring together, under one roof, three school facilities and a fourth school was to move into one of the vacant school buildings. Its purpose was to combine the physical resources of the three schools, while meeting the space needs of each individual facility. Although all three schools would be in one location, the programs that were offered in each school were expected to remain the same.

Inasmuch as the community rejected the project, the community's process of examining the project revealed that they were more concerned about the programs offered in the schools, rather than the needs of the buildings. This chapter attempts to provide an overview of the debates that took place in the community in order to give a clearer understanding about how the community of Kahnawake expects education to be controlled.

This project was a controversial topic of conversation in the community, with community members holding different opinions. It was an excellent venue to gauge how the process of consultation and community input manifests itself. The promotion of this project quickly brought to the forefront internal conflicts that exist in the community. Keeping control of education is important to the community because it felt that it is the sole responsibility of the community to decide what is required with respect to the programs offered.

With an understanding of the process of decolonizing the minds of the Mohawk people, the organizers attempted to reintroduce the democratic model of consensus building, a model that was previously used in Iroquois cultures. This project attempted to promote consensus over whether or not the project was going to proceed. Low participation rates in the decision-making process revealed that consensus building was not taking place on this issue. Inasmuch as there were some who participated in the process of offering input in the direction education should take in Kahnawake, they were only a minority of the community. It remains to be seen though, how much affect their input will have in shaping education content and pedagogy.

The Education Park Project

The Kahnawake Combined Schools Committee (KCSC) first proposed the education park project to Kahnawake parents after undertaking a process designed to restructure the educational system in Kahnawake, in 1998. A committee was struck of 85 parents, called the New Facilities Action Team, which developed action plans to address educational needs in terms of physical resources and curricular programs.

Their assessment revealed a lack of available physical resources to meet student needs and severe structural degradation in some of the schools. It proposed a new school facility that would house Kateri School, Karonhianonhnha School, and Step-by-Step Child and Family Center combined together on one site. When construction of the Education Park was to be completed, Survival School was scheduled to move into Kateri School's old building (KCCS, 2003: 4).

In 1999, community input was solicited by household surveys conducted by parents and guardians, acting as surveyors and interviewers, hired by the KCSC. The survey was conducted in 433 households in Kahnawake, asking parents what they thought of the proposed plan of building an Education Park. The survey found that a majority of parents supported the idea of having an education park with the elementary schools located together on the same site. The KCSC went ahead and began planning the building process. Karonhianonhnha School was to be demolished and the new school was to be built on that site (KCSC, 2002: 1, KCCS, 2003: 4).

All schools involved in the move to the Education Park were to remain autonomous, retaining their own administration and programs. The schools would share resources, such as a library, cafeteria and gymnasium space and hold special joint activities (KCSC, 2002: 1).

The federal government approved the plan and was prepared to transfer money to the Kahnawake Education Center for the project. A building committee was appointed by the KCSC to go over the planned facilities and to outline and review each school's unique needs. The committee consisted of teachers and parents from each of the schools that would be affected. Over the next three years the committee worked at developing

the Education Park, comparing other schools' experiences with similar transformations in neighboring Indigenous communities (KCCS, 2003: 4).

Halting the project

Construction was set to begin on June 12, 2002. However one month prior, some parents and teachers from Karonhianonhnha School began a campaign to halt the project. The group felt that their school's identity and its Mohawk immersion program would be jeopardized in the new Education Park (The Eastern Door, 2002). The catalyst for this sentiment was an announcement made by the Kahnawake Education Center that the grade four Mohawk immersion program at Karonhianonhnha School was going to be cut because of a lack of qualified Mohawk language teachers.

Those in opposition to the project outlined their concerns to the KCSC as, the loss of the immersion program, safety and security issues, disciplinary concerns about bullying between students in each school, and the loss of identity in a large school setting (KCSC, 2002: 2). The Mohawk immersion program is modeled after French immersion programs found in Quebec schools. During the first four years of elementary school, students receive language instruction Mohawk, and then English instruction in the last two years.

The parents' concern over having all the children located in one location, expressed as a security issue, reasoned that if any type of natural disaster or environmental catastrophe were to befall the school, a whole generation of children would be lost. Inasmuch as this type of occurrence would seem statistically improbable, one such event has happened to the Kahnawake people. In 1907, 33 men from Kahnawake died while building the Quebec Bridge, when it collapsed on them. Two iron

crosses were erected in the community to remember this tragedy and it was agreed that Kahnawake men were never again to work together on the same iron working job sites (Blanchard, 1980: 282).

The response from the KCSC addressed the concerns and redirected the issues. They pointed out in a special edition newsletter to parents, the importance of family involvement in language acquisition and practice as well as the benefit of enticing others to learn by being in close proximity to speakers. The KCSC illustrated this as a long-term positive aspect of the project. They stressed the importance of speaking the Mohawk language at home and of families taking some responsibility for language instruction. The KCSC directed the community's attention towards the benefits of bringing all the children together in a learning community, and the amount of money that would be saved through the pooling of resources. They reasoned that this would free financial resources for curriculum development. (KCSC, 2002: 3)

The KCSC decided that in order to fully address the concerns of the parents and teachers, they would bring the proposed project to the parents once again, giving them the opportunity to express themselves. The KCSC contracted the Kahnawake Community Consultation Services (KCCS) firm to conduct a poll. The KCCS distributed information booklets to the community and a week later set up polling stations for parents to ask questions, give comments, and receive information about the project.

The next step involved parents registering their opinions on secret ballots at the polling stations of what they wanted to happen with the Education Park project. After some deliberation, the KCSC amended who was eligible to vote, to include the whole community. This allowed everyone in the community an opportunity to participate.

However, the polling process was delayed because of KCSC's inability to achieve quorum at a meeting called to accept the information package that was developed for the poll.

Language Concerns

The people I interviewed discussed three major reasons why the project failed. They postulated that language concerns, a longstanding rivalry between factions of community members, and a disagreement between community members over the direction educational programs offered in Kahnawake schools should take, as possible variables to its failure.

Everyone I spoke with in the community agrees that the Mohawk language is important and that measures should be taken to promote the language, making sure that it is used and will survive. But this task is hard to fulfill with too few speakers who are willing and/or able to teach it to younger generations. One solution offered, is a project initiated by the Education Center of Kahnawake. It is promoting an intensive language program known as the Kanien'keha Ratiwennahnirats (Literacy Certificate Program) in an effort to increase the number of adult Mohawk speakers in Kahnawake.

Unfortunately, most of the program's graduates are not willing to teach. As one person I spoke to said, "Mohawk language retention is important to the community but there is a fear because of the number of graduates that just came out of the language program. Only six are going towards education¹" (Ryan, notes, 2002). There is a hope that as the program expands in number, more people will be drawn to teaching it to others.

¹ The language program that was started in the community is open to all community members. It is a one-year intensive program, which requires students to be immersed in a Mohawk speaking environment for 40 hours per week.

Whether or not they are capable teachers is something that also needs to be addressed. A couple of teachers I interviewed said that it is often the case that they cannot teach. In their mind, this leads to behavior problems in the classroom. Especially when a teacher has had no teaching experience (Ryan, notes, 2002).

The need to teach the Mohawk language to adults is motivated by the fact that most adults between the ages of 30 and 50 cannot speak it (Hoover et al., 1992: 271). People in this age group often had parents who were forbidden to speak Mohawk in the Residential schools. At federal day schools, the language was not taught, as English had become the primary language spoken in the community. By the time their children began school, language acquisition efforts were being renewed in the community. Grandparents who were once forbidden to speak Mohawk were now speaking with their grandchildren (Hoover, et al. 1992: 271). Consequently, these children who are now in school in Kahnawake often speak more Mohawk than their teachers.

The first teacher to teach the Mohawk language in Kahnawake taught an immersion class at Step by Step in the 1970's. The teacher, a Mohawk speaker who instituted the program, found an assistant to converse with her and the students in the classroom. She taught the class, graduating them from kindergarten to grade one. Then another Mohawk speaking teacher taught the group of students from grade one to four. By the time students reached grade five, they were taught English by another teacher. This teacher taught them in grades five and six. Some students from that first immersion program continued on into private secondary schools without having any transitional problems; receiving a good elementary school education which met the requirements of

the province, while also receiving solid instruction in Mohawk language skills (Ryan, notes, 2002).

In the mid-1970's, a desire developed in the community for the continuation of this type of program. Teachers organized the transfer of the immersion program to Karonhianonhnha School, but there were criticisms because parents expected more than what the program offered. Parents were under the impression that students were going to receive a program/school where they would graduate fully bilingual, as it was being presented as a full immersion program. Another concern was that while the teachers being hired were fluent speakers of the Mohawk language, they did not possess any teacher training (Ryan, notes, 2002).

The KCSC created a yearlong program for teachers to learn Mohawk. The program was remedial, as they were not able to teach adults, who did not possess a base in the language (Ryan, notes, 2002). This meant that teachers who had not been taught any Mohawk as children would not be taught the language at all.

Today there are not enough teachers to teach the Mohawk language, and those who can, are approaching retirement. There is a hope that they will continue to teach until new Mohawk speaking teachers can be hired. One interviewee said, "There is a problem of moving people up so that they can take over and not push their own down, who's coming up? Not enough people to replace those who are retiring" (Ryan, notes, 2002). Further, he argued for the need to spend money on replacing retiring teachers, as there is not enough of a replacement teacher population coming in.

Another issue concerning the Mohawk language, raised by my interviewees, was the history of how the language has been spoken, and what is considered part of the

written language today. Prior to colonization, other Iroquoian languages influenced the Mohawk language. When settlers first arrived, trade between the French and the Mohawks meant that words from both languages began to integrate into each language's lexicon. For example, the Mohawk word for lamb used to be "timoton". This word was derived from the French word "mouton". It has since been changed to a Mohawk derived word. This is a natural process in language development. That is, no language is without influence from another. As people from different cultures come into contact with one another, they often bring items, or ways of thinking and being, that are absent from the other culture. The names of these new items or ideas are not necessarily changed but rather are adopted from the originating culture. When Kahnawake began efforts to renew use of the Mohawk language in the community, some language engineering took place: concerted efforts were made to remove all French from the Mohawk language. One teacher I interviewed said,

"The community members are the worst enemy for language survival and will be the ones who end up killing the language. At first Mohawk was the mother tongue of Mohawk speakers and French was the second language. Thus many French words made their way into the Mohawk language. As kids learn how to speak Mohawk, they are corrected when they use a word that was adopted from French. Now new words are being created based on the traditional Mohawk lexicon and that's being accepted as tradition rather than actual words that were used 100 years ago" (Ryan, notes, 2002).

Many people feel this approach causes the Mohawk language to be less accessible. The community loses control over the language in favor of an ideal of a pure language, impacting the number of possible speakers, resulting in fewer people learning it.

This language debate in the community of Kahnawake is similar to the language debates that took place in the 1980's in the rest of the province (Handler, 1988, Ryan,

notes, 2002). There is a prevalent belief that if too many rules are placed on a language it cannot grow. In order for a language to grow, an introduction of new words and phrases has to be introduced into the lexicon to describe new experiences and new items. The Mohawk language as it was spoken prior to the French influences was an oral language with a strong emphasis on verb usage. Mohawk today is written and must contend with translating English and French words that do not have a Mohawk equivalent. This means that there is a need to create new words. It is thought by the community that this can happen from only a distinctly Mohawk lexicon as the language must be preserved in its pure form.

Preserving language in its purest form is an extreme example of language engineering. The latter has part of its roots in what has been referred to as “linguistic relativity”, a concept presented in the works of Benjamin Whorf (J. Leavitt, in press, n.d.). This concept is often found in association with debates about the relationship between language and identity, and particularly with regards the place of language in the construction of the nation. Therefore, as every linguistic concept will not have an exact translation into the Mohawk language, a middle ground needs to be found so that the language can keep growing.

The treatment of Mohawk and French languages is similar in that both cultures see language as a means to explain thoughts and characteristics of their respective cultures (Handler, 1988). How both cultural groups treat language is similar in that they both perceive the degeneration of their languages through linguistic impurities as a direct challenge to the preservation of nationalist sentiments (Handler, 1988: 167, Ryan, notes, 2002).

Both French and Mohawk linguistic cultures have created language laws that place their language as their peoples' official language. This is an effort to preserve the language (Handler, 1988: 169; MCK press release, 2000). As with the passing of Bill 101, significant efforts were made to remove all English words from the Quebecois French language. For example, all stop signs were changed from the word 'stop', to the word 'arrêt'. In Kahnawake, street signs are being changed from English to Mohawk.

The difference between the two linguistic cultures is that there are more French speakers to carry the language forward, than Mohawk speakers to carry the Mohawk language forward. Presently, there are fewer speakers of the Mohawk language than there were of the French language during the introduction of Bill 101. Another hindrance is the fact that Mohawk only became a written language in the 1980's, whereas French has a very long written history.

Applying language purity restrictions on the Mohawk language in Kahnawake, does not promote the growth of the language, but rather hinders it. A plan to increase funding to teach people how to speak the language, rather than spending money on defining the rules of what the true language is, is what is needed.

When considering the future of the education park project, it appears that concerns over the language seemed to influence the community's decision. The threat of losing a grade level in the immersion program represented a real concern for the parents of students in Karonhianonhnha School. The community needs to address the reality that not enough teachers are knowledgeable in Mohawk language skills. Inasmuch as the Mohawk language revival is a form of decolonization of the mind, the process is

effectively blocked when too much attention is given to language rules rather than fully embracing the need to increase the amount of Mohawk speakers.

History of Community Divisions

Another opinion expressed by my interviewees is that the failure of the Education Park project was directly linked to on going rivalry that exists in the community between Kateri School and Karonhianonhnha School. This rivalry is historic. Divisions have existed between community members who were Catholic, Protestant, and those who were considered traditionalists that attended the Longhouse.

In the 1960's, Catholic students were schooled at Kateri School and were told not to fraternize with the Protestant students who attended Karonhianonhnha School, and vice versa. The Traditionalists were to be avoided by both groups of religious practitioners' altogether. The community was divided into a hierarchy; Catholics the most prominent and the majority, Protestants the minority, and the traditionalists making up a very small percentage of the community's population.

When I spoke with people in the community, I was told that the rivalry that initially began as a division between those who were Catholic at Kateri School and those who were Protestant at Karonhianonhnha School has now become linguistically based; between basic Mohawk language acquisition at Kateri School and Mohawk immersion at Karonhianonhnha School. Kateri School is viewed of as a school for students who cannot succeed at Karonhianonhnha School, and Karonhianonhnha School students are thought of as successful because they can speak Mohawk. Parents at both schools continuously question the quality of education at both schools since the immersion program was founded. One teacher I spoke with said,

“When I was a kid there was a division between the Catholics and the Protestants and the kids were not allowed to intermingle. An even smaller group was the longhouse people- they were grouped with the Protestants. There was a song we used to sing about being against each other, but the kids had no idea what the differences were between us. I only found out much later that one of my playmates was longhouse. The nun’s did nothing to stop this rivalry” (Ryan, notes, 2002).

The children were told to be divided amongst their community, but did not understand why. Nonetheless they adhered to these constructed divisions. Today, these divisions continue to be enforced in the debates surrounding language acquisition. The parents of children in Mohawk immersion feel that their children are somehow better than those children not in this program, and visa versa. The religious division that existed previously was forced onto the people by religious organizations in the community. Today, the community is forcing language divisions onto itself, often by the same generation of people who were forced into religious divisions.

Another interviewee said that when he was growing up, there was an idea of the ‘dirty Catholic’ or the ‘dirty Protestant’. “Being Protestant was just a little above being a pagan (longhouse). Those people were the ones who were closer to the land, the farmers, and they are today’s traditionalists” (Ryan, notes, 2002).

Thus, the project has fallen victim to a rivalry between parents. The discussions had become emotionally charged and caused new divisions in the community based on those who supported the project and those who would not. One teacher remarked “the biggest change that affects schooling in Kahnawake now is instead of fighting for things that’s needed with the government, we’re fighting with ourselves” (Ryan, notes, 2002).

Educational Quality Concerns

Another contributing factor to the demise of the Education Park project was the parents and community members' feeling that instead of building new schools, the KCSC should be focusing on improving the curriculum of Kahnawake schools. Those I interviewed pointed to a number of needs. Some felt that of pressing importance was the Mohawk language and cultural programs, and that the money for the Education Park should go to improving them. Others felt that if the three schools were located on the same site, the immersion program could be further encroached on because the schools' administration would phase it out as it is a costly program.

One community member went further by pointing out the need for other types of educational programs.

“There should be more money spent on improving programs offered in town. Sports already have a lot (of money) and drama should get more. It (drama) seems to be the last thing people think about. Drama has a long history in Kahnawake going back 150 years” (Ryan: 2002, notes).

Presently, no drama courses are offered for credit in Kahnawake. However, one fine arts course for credit is offered in an art program at Survival School, which includes all forms of visual arts. There is a drama club in the community, as well as different styles of dance instruction, but these are considered extra-curricular and are not affiliated with any school.

The lack of artistic programs in schools is a problem within the province of Quebec. There are very few schools, which offer these types of programs for students. Should a student wish to pursue this type of education, they must be prepared to go outside of their school district to receive it.

Another community member said “Language is important, both Mohawk and French. French for work and communicating outside of the community and Mohawk to protect the language as it’s dying. It’s good what’s happening in town now with language programs” (Ryan, notes, 2002). Presently French and Mohawk are offered at all schools in Kahnawake in varying degrees, but no French immersion program exists. Any parent or guardian who wishes their child to be proficient in French is required to send him or her outside the community for instruction.

Proficiency in the French language is important for any type of business association or relationship outside of the community. Not being able to communicate in French can seriously hinder any local or provincial economic growth for the community. By not offering French immersion in Kahnawake schools, parents and guardians are forced to send their children outside the community for education.

Another person said he accepts the idea of making all types of educational programs available in town, instead of spending money to send students out of the community for their education. He posited that money should be spent on programs in the community, such as drama and art, or improving the quality of ones that already exist so that students remain in the community for their education. He said, “It’s the only place in the world where we have an education system that needs help and we’d rather spend money on sending kids to schools outside their community” (Ryan, notes, 2002).

Self Interest Concerns

Another source of opposition was purely motivated by the protection of self-interest. With little concern for the success of the educational program as a whole or the promotion of the community’s effort to make education a success, parents who had

originally supported the proposal, changed their minds when they realized that the project was not going progressing to their specifications. One parent changed his mind when he found out that the company hired to do the construction was not from the community. Because the company he supported had not won the construction bid, he no longer wanted to have the Education Park built (Ryan, notes, 2002).

Some teachers feared that they would lose resources that they already possessed in the shuffle of moving schools. One teacher I interviewed said, “I didn’t want to lose my classroom space. Being in the old school building, I have a class built for 30 and I’ve only got 15 kids. I have a fully equipped classroom” (Ryan, notes, 2002).

The Resolution

The halting of the Education Park project was major concern for the KCSC, as they believed that they might lose funding for any future projects from the already slated money from the Canadian government. The estimated cost of the delays to the KCSC was \$600,000.00 (The Eastern Door, 2002). One community member expressed his concern about this situation.

“What’s going to happen with the money needs to be discussed as the government is going to say fine we’ll hold the money while you decide and when you do, you can stand in line to get it again. There’s not enough time for that. The government is not saying okay, you obviously need two schools here have the extra money they aren’t upping the amount” (Ryan: 2002, notes).

The need to act quickly meant not only making a decision about the project, but also meant making a decision that would appeal to the concerns that had been expressed by the parents about the project. Considering the range and nature of the concerns, the Education Park project was doomed to fail from the moment parents began protesting it.

To address the campaign organized by the parents against the Education Park project, the KCSC decided to hold a poll in which they would open up a dialogue about the project with the parents. The results of this poll would be part of a final report that would be submitted to the KCSC. The KCSC would then take the information into consideration, and inform the community of their decision on whether or not to go through with the project. The purpose of the poll was to provide information to the community, provide a space for the community to debate the issues, and ultimately say what they wanted to happen with the Education Park by registering their opinion on what they wanted.

The polling process began with a media campaign. A committee set up to oversee the campaign organized a number of activities aimed at reaching the community. They published an information booklet about the education park and the upcoming poll, wrote articles in the local newspaper the Eastern Door, gave an interview to the local radio station K103 and TV station, as well as setting up three information booths located throughout the community.

At first, the polling process was only open to parents of students attending one of the affected schools governed by the KCSC. After much deliberation and delays, the KCSC decided to open the polling process to the whole adult community. People were welcomed to give their verbal comments at the polling stations, as well as participating formally by answering questions in writing, designed to elicit opinions about how Kateri School and Karonhianonhnha School should be physically positioned in the community. The verbal comments made at the polls were published in the KCCS's final report presented to the KCSC.

The bullying and “calling down” (insulting) displayed between parents at the polling stations clearly demonstrated the rivalry between the Kateri School and Karonhianonhnha School. Karonhianonhnha School parents questioned the polling process. They believed that the information booklet was designed to favour the Kateri School. At the polls Kateri School parents were upset because they felt that Karonhianonhnha School parents were acting as if Kateri School was not good enough for them. The Kahnawake Community Consultation Services (KCCS) firm commented in its final report that there was a significant amount of intimidation at the polls between parents from both schools (KCCS, 2003: 23).

The polling station was opened on December 7, 2002. Each community member was asked to place themselves into one of four categories: parents of Kateri School students, parents of Karonhianonhnha School students, parents of other students in the community, and the general public. The opinions were registered in the form of a vote in which 215 community members participated out of the 6807 community members eligible to register. Parents from Kateri School and Karonhianonhnha School were given the opportunity to register whether their opinion was going to be counted in the overall tally of the votes.

People were asked if they agreed or not agreed to have Kateri School and Karonhianonhnha School together in one building. The following Table provides a breakdown of who participated in the voting, and how they voted (KCCS, 2003).

| VOTER | YES | NO |
|------------------------|------------|------------|
| Kateri School | 19 | 20 |
| Karonhianonhnha School | 7 | 63 |
| Other Schools | 13 | 17 |
| Community at large | 24 | 50 |
| Total Vote | 63 | 150 |

If the answer was no, participants were asked to choose between the four following options: 1-two schools with two buildings linked on the same site, 2- two schools with two buildings not linked on the same site, 3- two schools on separate sites, and 4- other options. The following Table shows the percentage of votes that went towards each choice.

| OPTION | PERCENT |
|--------|---------|
| 1 | 17 |
| 2 | 5 |
| 3 | 79 |
| 4 | 5 |

KCCS, 2003

The referendum findings were ultimately accepted by the KCSC, and the Educational Park project was shelved. Seventy percent of the 215 people who answered the questions at the poll did not want the schools on the same site, and of that majority 79% wanted to have two new schools built in separate locations (KCCS, 2003: 12). The majority of people voted against the proposal because they feared what would happen if Karonhianhna and Kateri School students shared the same learning space. It would seem that this fear superseded the desire to have most of the students in Kahnawake forming a closer learning community, or having more money available to improve curriculum programs, and the possible elimination of the division in the community based on those who can speak Mohawk and those who cannot.

The Aftermath

With the Education Park Project shelved, the money allotted for the project was divided three ways with a slight penalty for the three schools that were supposed to move. Each school was to submit a proposal for renovations. Kateri School submitted a proposal for a gym, a cafeteria, and a new office and has purchased the land adjacent to the school

doubling its size. They will build a Kindergarten wing. The Step-by-Step program is in a new facility behind Karonhianonhnha School, and Karonhianonhnha School is constructing a new building expected to be ready for the 2005-2006 school year (Ryan, notes, 2002).

When I spoke with some teachers from Survival school about the project and the impact the new decision had on them and their school, one said that he thought that Survival school was over-looked. Another teacher felt that Survival school was over-looked “because the community forgets that the students at survival are kids too. So now, money is going to Step by Step and Kateri” (Ryan, notes, 2002).

Mistrust exists between community members and the governing bodies that have been elected to administer the community’s institutions. In talking to parents, teachers, and community members about the Education Park, one thing that became quite clear was that this mistrust has extended to the relationship between the community and the KCSC. The community mistrusts the committee because they do not feel they are accountable enough to them and feel that the committee is incompetent. The committee acts without community consultation because they perceive parents as too uninformed about education in Kahnawake to know what they are doing, as parents are not participating enough in their children’s education.

The final report from the Kahnawake Community Consultation Services (KCCS) firm exposed a lack of understanding by KCSC of its role and function within the community as well as confusion over its governing structure. Members were tripped up by their own by-laws when making decisions. The report suggested that the committee

should reorient itself on its mission to better understand what they were supposed to be doing (KCCS, 2003: 23).

The KCSC's mistrust of parents is rooted in the difficulties related to parents' lack of willingness to participate on the committee. The KCSC have had trouble getting parents to sit on the committee because of the required time commitment and overall lack of interest. The committee consists of two parents/guardians from Kateri School, two parents/guardians from Karonhianonhnha School, two parents/guardians from Survival School, two representatives from the Longhouse, and four parents/guardians of students from nursery school to CEGEP. Parents are appointed by their respective school councils, which nominate the parents from a pool of parents that volunteer to sit on their children's school council. The remaining four parents of students who attend nursery school through CEGEP outside the community are elected at the KCSC general meeting. Each member is appointed to a three-year term (KCSC, 1995). Quorum for KCSC general meetings is half of the members plus one. There had been five seats vacant on the twelve-member committee for most of the year. By January 2003, after considerable community pressure all seats were filled (The Eastern Door, 2002).

A member of the KCSC remarked that Mohawk values are now in conflict. "Before 70% of parents would be participating in school life, now 30% of parents are involved." He felt that community members should be required to sell back what they learned to the community. He said, "In education parents need to be informed of how to be better consumers of their education services that they receive" (Ryan, notes, 2002). When I asked teachers about how much parents participate in their children's education, I was told that the percentage is very low. Parents do not seem to have enough time.

One teacher, who taught Catholicism, told me that she had only one student in her class from September to November. In early November, she began a class project to design a wreath for Remembrance Day. She had mentioned to the class that they were going to the church the next day for a Remembrance Day Service. A student mentioned that he could not go to the church because he went to the church across the tracks (Longhouse 207), referring to the longhouse as a church. She called home and explained to the parents that their son was in her religion class and asked if he was supposed to be there. The parents said no and that he was not allowed to go to the church. He was then transferred out of class for the religion period. This experience revealed to my interviewee that if the students were not being taught morals and religious values in the home, in order to recognize the difference between the two, the school had to assume this responsibility. Consequently, the schools are not taking on this responsibility and ironically, the boy was a member of her class the following year, and wanted to help decorate the church for a celebration (Ryan, notes, 2002).

Conclusion and Summary

In this chapter I examined the Education Park project as a means of assessing community involvement in the decision making process. The process being the education system which educational administrators had established with the intention of promoting Mohawk language and culture.

The Education Park project demise reveals that as Kahnawake reinvents itself, participation in decisions about education and the process by which this unfolds and is understood is an issue for the community. Control, pedagogy and the needs of the community in education require consensus in Kahnawake.

My observation of the handling of this project reveals how the community values full community support of decisions made on their behalf. In Kahnawake, the collective desire to focus on what is being taught to students supersedes any bricks and mortar project, if the community believes that such a project would interfere with Kahnawake curriculum. Regardless of which segment of the population is directly affected by a decision, the sentiment expressed is for consensus when advocating for change in the community. However, the reality is that full participation in community decisions and community life is a sentiment rather than a reality.

The value placed on receiving full support from community members on initiatives derives from the community's desire to return to traditional ways of decision-making. Prior to colonization, decisions were made collectively, through consensus building. This was possible because members lived communally in longhouses with more than one family in each dwelling, allowing for more contact with each other. Today people live in single-family houses, and are separate from each other thereby experiencing a sense of individuality that was not known to them before colonization.

Today people are more likely to get involved when there is an initiative put forth that affects them and their family. People do not always feel bound to think about how the initiative will affect the community as a whole. Decisions of this nature are a reflection of members acting out of a sense of protecting their own individual interests, rather than the community as a whole. Interestingly, people in the community still refer to decisions made as community-based.

The polling process revealed that the community felt it important to keep control of education, as it is the community's mandate to decide what is required of the programs

offered. The project failed because participating community members thought that the money should go to bettering programs offered in Kahnawake. In the aftermath, the curriculum has not changed and no money has been allocated to its development. The schools remain separate and the values used to come to this decision are skewed.

Regardless of the desire to have full community participation, only a few members actually do participate. Even though language was the issue for halting the project, there is an absence of new initiatives to address the immediate need for more fluent teachers.

Bringing the issue of community control over education to the community allowed for existing internal conflicts to dominate future discussions. Unfortunately the issue remains the same and the division that exists in the community between Kateri School and Karonhianonhnha School remains intact. So long as value continues to be placed on individuality in everyday life over the needs of the community, full community participation in decision-making cannot be fully realized.

The community of Kahnawake, in their desire to return to traditional ways of community organization, are encountering conflict because the community has naturally evolved in a very different way. The community has been strongly influenced by the experiences of colonization as well as their proximity to the large metropolitan area of Montreal. Everyone has a sense of self, their own house, their own car, and their own individual property. Therefore, the desire to protect the individual is stronger than the desire to protect the community.

In the next chapter, I will be discussing a student project's success in one of the schools in Kahnawake. The organization of a youth conference, co-hosted by one of the schools, was designed to allow youth the opportunity to reflect about their futures. It is an

excellent illustration of how programs are introduced into schools and integrated into the curriculum.

Chapter 6 The Youth Conference

Introduction

In this chapter, I will be discussing a youth conference that was held in February 2002 at Kahnawake Survival School in collaboration with Concordia University in Montreal. The conference was primarily organized for students of Survival School, but it was open to all Kahnawake community members. The youth conference was an excellent venue to assess the extent of youth participation in discussions and debates about community control of education, and the extent to which the community integrates the youth and their desire to be involved in the decision-making process. Moreover, I was interested in studying the degree to which the youth saw the process as relevant to them and viewed themselves as a party to the decision-making process.

After discussing the background of the conference, I will discuss my experiences as a participant and an observer. I will then discuss the participants and organizers reported experiences. In the final discussion, I will attempt to convey how the youth conference is an example of community control of education. I will also discuss the values that shaped the organizing of the conference, and how it taken place out of the economic needs and growth of the community, and how these values are perceived as being traditional Mohawk values. The community is achieving the process of decolonizing the minds of their youth by reintroducing traditional values.

Background

The focus of the conference was the examination of the diverse needs of youth and to provide them with the tools of empowerment. Its goal was to help youth decide on life and career goals by showing them the process by which to attain them. Mohawk

culture and the promotion of cultural self-confidence were integral to this conference. Organizers focused on presenting these tools in a holistic way; spiritually, emotionally, physically and mentally. The organizers chose, based on their assessment of youth needs, to have workshops emphasizing aspects of Mohawk culture that are considered sacred, such as personal medicine and how to conduct a sweat lodge. They also chose to have workshops addressing bullying at school and how to improve self-esteem. Another workshop was on selecting role models. All of the workshops followed the same principle of addressing the topic in a way that was sensitive to the experiences of the Mohawk reality, as understood in the community of Kahnawake by presenters and participants alike.

The proposal for the conference was discussed during planning meetings held between Survival School and members of a research team from Concordia University. The principal, careers counselor, and social counselor from Survival School, and two professors from the John Molson School of Business (JMSB) constituted the research team from Concordia University.

Those involved indicated that Mohawk culture and developing career opportunities were important to youth, and that these issues needed to be formally addressed in the community. After some deliberation, a conference format was thought to be the best way of achieving this goal as well as honoring the idea of historically traditional gatherings. Traditionally, gatherings were events where agreements and exchanges of all types were made between different nations. This conference was to be an exchange of different ideas (Conference Report, 2002: 3, The Eastern Door, 2002). The theme of the conference was “Success begins in the dreams of youth.” Most of the

students from the middle school (grade seven and grade eight) volunteered their time and energy to the conference's planning, and seemed to be the group of students that expressed the most interest in its conception.

The conference intended to show students that they could be Indigenous people and be successful.

“From its inception the function of the conference was to provide youth with a forum to discuss and address issues related to being Native, and how they can make choices that accommodate both being native and successful with the decisions that they make in their careers and lives workshops youth were to explore and identify viable, holistic strategies for dealing with the choices they will make as young adults” (Conference Report, 2002: 9).

Through discussions, the youth were expected to take the opportunity to voice their opinions on the future of Kahnawake at the conference.

Fourteen community organizations, and Concordia University, through a Social and Humanities Research Council (SHERC) funding grant, provided funding, services, and time. The four largest contributors were the Kahnawake Shakotiiia'takehnhas Community Services, The Mohawk Council of Kahnawake, Tawatohnni'saktha Kahnawake Economic Development Commission, and the Caisse Populaire Kahnawake. Students and teachers from the Kahnawake Survival School volunteered the most time to the planning and execution of preparations.

Concordia University provided a SHERC (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council) research grant from the Community University Research Alliance (CURA). The grant was for research on the social economy in Indigenous communities across Canada. Concordia's participants became involved in the community of Kahnawake through a connection made with the Tawatohnni'saktha Kahnawake

Economic Development Commission, where one of the researchers gives workshops on entrepreneurship. The conference was a joint initiative co-sponsored by the CURA research team and Survival School.

The Youth Conference: Day One

The conference was two days, with one day at Survival School and the other at Concordia University. It was held at different locations to show youth participants that possibilities that are open to them outside of the community of Kahnawake. By receiving them at Concordia, the youth were exposed to the university environment. There were three sessions addressing different themes of tradition and culture, social economy, and personal and social development. Each session included between five and seven workshops on topics corresponding to the theme of the session. Each workshop was conducted by persons from the associations involved in the funding or organizing of the conference. The packages given to each participant were complete with schedules and explanations of the organized activities. It outlined the themes and the workshops, providing forms for feedback on each of the workshops the participants attended.

The conference was held on Thursday February 27, and Friday February 28, 2002. Thursday's sessions focused on the themes of tradition and culture. The sessions were held at Survival School in Kahnawake. Friday's sessions focused on social economy and personal/social development. These were held at Concordia University, in Montreal. The following accounts are my observations of conference sessions I participated in on Thursday and Friday.

The conference opened with a speech by Tom Jackson, an Indigenous actor/activist from Manitoba. There were approximately 200 people in the gymnasium of

Kahnawake Survival School, mostly youth. The adults present were teachers, parents and community members. I sat with a parent I knew, listening to Tom's speech, observing how the students reacted to him and interacted with one another.

He gave an empowering speech about having a voice and using it. He spoke about communicating problems within Indigenous communities, and how solutions are attainable by asking, because a structure exists in Indigenous cultures to help solve problems. He told the audience that this is power and that they have the power, they have a voice, and to be proactive. The students listened to what he had to say but seemed to be easily distracted, getting up and walking in and out often while he spoke. Many of the students did not know who he was, and with non-compulsory attendance students did not feel obliged to stay. This did not seem to bother Tom Jackson as he spoke. He focused on those who were listening and spoke to them. The students were acting as if what he was saying was not something new or profound. It was as if his speech was something they heard all the time. After he finished speaking, the Principal gave instructions for the afternoon workshops. The students left sporadically in groups. As the room emptied out, I noticed a group of people I knew who were from outside the community. They were there specifically for the workshops on traditional Indigenous practices, something many of the youth feel they should learn more about. The fact that those from outside the community came in specifically for these workshops, expresses that they too want to learn more about traditional Indigenous practices.

The afternoon sessions introduced participants to traditional Indigenous practices of story telling, personal medicine, rites of passage, and the sweat lodge. The underlying message was the important social role these traditional practices play as cultural

institutions in bringing people together, solving community problems, and perpetuating social and mythical history. Participants seemed to be looking for ways of how the evolution of these cultural institutions could help the community today and in the future.

Workshop participants were instructed on the background of these traditions, what they meant to Mohawk peoples, how to participate in these activities, and then were invited to participate in what was being offered. There was a feeling of comfort in the workshops. Participants were at ease while participating, acting as if they were part of the workshop.

Throughout the day the youth's participation level in the conference was high. The students seemed excited, perhaps because it was the first day, or because there were many visitors on the campus at the conference. The students appeared as though they were not quite sure of what they were to expect. They seemed to be comfortable with the way the workshops were set up, knowing where everything was and familiar with the content of the workshops. The workshops were held in spaces specifically designed for the workshop. For example, the sweat lodge workshop took place outside where a sweat lodge was in the process of being built on the campus.

It seemed that the first day of the conference offered a range of topics that appealed to the participants. The second day of the conference I observed a different sense of participation from the youth that attended.

Youth Conference: Day Two

On Friday morning at Concordia University, there were approximately 120 people present in the de Seve theatre. Most were students from Kahnawake Survival School, but

there were also some University administrators' from Concordia present, as well as teachers from Kahnawake Survival School and the speakers from the days scheduled sessions. Some teachers and presenters were sitting at back of the theatre and the students sat in the front. Other teachers were sitting at the end of the seat rows with the students. I recognized some of the presenters, so I sat with them. It was a good spot to observe from.

The conference opened with a thanksgiving prayer given by one of the students, followed by the Principal of Survival School introducing the day. Various administrators from Concordia who were involved in the funding and planning of the conference then spoke, explaining where the funding came from and what connection Concordia had with the project presented in this session of the conference. The main speaker from Concordia explained that the CURA research project design programs are aimed at assisting community development and control of jobs in the communities.

I observed many students fidgeting while listening to the opening speech. The speaker was not grabbing their attention. He spoke as if he was speaking to university students instead of high school students. The speaker, noticing this, changed his style of presenting for the next section of his presentation. This implied to me that the speech was not speaking to the needs of the youth. There was little communication with the youth about what they expected, and what was going to be delivered to them at the conference. The youth in the audience were treating this as if they were in a school assembly, only in a new venue. They did not see a reflection of their needs in these speeches.

The speaker presented a Power Point presentation on the research by the CURA research team conducted at the Aboriginal Career Symposium in October 2001. There

were 433 Indigenous youth in attendance at the symposium held in Eastern Canada. At this symposium, they asked youth what they believed most Indigenous people did for a living and what profession they saw themselves doing in the future. When the presenter gave these statistics he asked the audience what they thought of the statistics, and he asked them to respond in a game show format. He divided the audience in half and told them to guess the results of the survey conducted at the symposium. The team that had the most similar answers won the most points. This format received more interest from the audience. They seemed to respond better to this type of back and forth between them and the presenter. They seemed to appreciate that their input was wanted.

Through a show of hands, the audience responses were similar with the most popular profession of the survey, a business entrepreneur. Twenty years ago, the most popular profession in the community of Kahnawake was Ironwork. Participants of both the symposium and the conference saw themselves moving toward professional occupations such as doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers, police force, artists and athletes.

The more the presenter included the audience in his presentation, the more they responded with interest and interaction. When he asked if the audience understood what needed to happen in order for them to have access to these professions, they recognized that most of these professions required a university education. As the presenter reviewed the CURA research findings, the audience was able to confirm them. The audience agreed that it was youth between the ages of twelve and fourteen that had the highest expectancy rate for attending university, out of all the age groups who participated in the conference. Interestingly enough, it was this age group that participated the most in the preparations for this conference. The other significant finding was that women were

expected to be the ones with the highest university attainment. The audience agreed with this, but absent from this dialogue, was the fact that there are more females than males in Kahnawake. Whether or not this was considered in this statistic is unknown.

As the presentation came to an end, the audience organized into groups and walked over to the buildings where the workshops were being held. The teachers met at the back of the hall to determine who would lead each group to each workshop. The presenters from the workshops left first, and then the teachers lead the students in groups.

The first set of morning sessions introduced participants to workshops focusing on social economy. The topics that were covered were career opportunities, entrepreneurship, and challenges in post-secondary education. These were interactive workshops where the participants were given the opportunity to ask questions and learn about different career paths available to them.

The workshops concentrated on making the concepts being presented tangible by using the Kahnawake community as the starting point. For example, in the workshop that I attended called "Creating Community Vision", the speaker spoke of the assets and constraints that exist in the community of Kahnawake, such as the railroad, the hydro line, and the original land allotment. There were 18 students and 6 teachers in the workshop. The presenter was from the community, working for a firm that has a contract with the MCK (band council), so there was a sense of mutual regard throughout the workshop. The workshop lasted one hour. I sat in the back near the teachers so that I could observe without interfering. The teachers did not participate in the workshop, and the students ignored them. They spoke their minds without checking for reactions from their teachers,

and at one point put the presenter on the spot by asking him about his choice to live outside the community despite the fact that he is from Kahnawake.

He then asked the participants to use traditional understandings of the land to explain land use. The purpose of this was to help participants understand what assets and constraints are, where they exist, and how they affect their community. He then showed participants that it is important to have community consultation for town planning. There was a lot of discussion in this workshop, with the presenter asking the students questions to lead the discussion. The room was not conducive to a workshop, as it was held in a classroom and the desk and chairs were arranged facing the front, where the presenter stood. In other words, it seemed more like a class discussion than a workshop.

In the workshop the presenter started by discussing the resources available in the community, like hospitals, arenas and schools. He told participants to think about better places for these buildings and community planning. The participants were challenged to think about the future they envision for the community of Kahnawake and how they plan to stay in town.

The workshop was animated due to the fact that the presenter did not give the students information about community planning; instead he asked them questions about what they thought so that they understood the concepts of community planning on their terms. He handed them out maps, asked them to colour them with the landmarks they recognized, and to put in where they thought things should be. He used overhead maps from a computer-mapping program for visualization as he told them about new land acquisitions. He asked for their opinion of what they thought should go on these new acquisitions. He talked to them about the natural resources available in the community

of Kahnawake, telling them about how the community participates in maintaining the quarry. He also discussed the effects of the birth rate, migration, and death on the population in relation to land use.

Throughout the workshop the students interacted with the presenter. They knew him and appeared to feel more comfortable with him, even feeling the freedom to joke around. At the end of the workshop, the students handed in their coloured maps with the identifiable landmarks; the presenter seemed a little shocked by this. It was as if he did not expect to get so many back. I would have liked to be able to see what participants drew.

Inasmuch as the material presented in the workshop was of interest to the participants, the way it was organized missed the point of what it was supposed to achieve. The youth left the workshop with more knowledge about their community, and about community development, but they were unable to see themselves in it, as it was not presented as something they can participate in making happen. While they were given the opportunity to hand in maps of what they considered landmarks, they were not drawing what they thought the community should look like. Instead, they were taught about a different way of seeing their community in terms of physical environment. Students reacted as if they were in class in a new school, teachers acted as if it was a break from teaching, and the presenter acted like a teacher. While I do not wish to dismiss the achievements of the workshop, I felt a gap between what the workshops intended to achieve and what it actually achieved. If the intention was to give youth a say in what they use to shape their future, it was not realized at this conference.

When the workshop ended I ran into one of the teachers who helped organized the conference. He told me how this conference has shown the strength of Kahnawake youth in articulating how they see their future and how the plan to make it happen. He spoke of how impressed he was with them and how his own childhood was very different. As we walked into the next workshop, one of the presenters from another workshop came and sat with us until the workshop started. I noticed that only the adults paid any attention to me throughout the conference. I assumed it was because they knew everyone else. I was the only one not from Kahnawake that was participating in this day of the conference.

The second set of morning sessions focused on personal and social development and offered workshops addressing sports, self-esteem, bullying, justice, and role models. These were informative workshops, which gave information to the participants on resources available addressing these topics. For example, in the workshop “Finding your own first nations role model”, the speaker discussed the importance of parents as primary role models. There were 26 students and 12 adults in this workshop, which lasted an hour. There were more people attending this workshop because the presenter was Tom Porter, the keynote speaker and a notable Mohawk elder from Akwesasne. As this workshop was about role models, he spoke about the different type of role models available to youth in the community. He spoke about grandparents, aunts, cousins, and clan chiefs as important choices, but stressed that the most important role models are mothers.

He discussed the importance of positive and negative forces in our lives and explained their importance through the story of the twins featured in the Iroquois creation myth, one twin brother being a trickster character and the other brother, a man of great patience.

As he spoke the students and adults seemed awe struck. The speaker's charisma captivated the audience as they listened to him recount the Mohawk creation story and memories from his own life. At one point two girls in the back of the room began making noises while they rustled coins. All of the students in their immediate area were very quick to signal them to be quiet by staring at them with reprimanding glares.

Clearly, students paid more attention when a workshop was closer to their needs and interests. However, this particular workshop was more of a lecture than a workshop, as workshops connote full participation from all participants in an environment conducive to that. This workshop, like the other, was held in a classroom with the desks facing forward and the speaker at the front of the room imparting information to the students.

Evaluation of the Conference

After each workshop, each participant was asked to evaluate the workshop they attended on a form included in their conference information package. The evaluation form asked the participant to rate on a sliding scale from one to five the workshop they just attended. There were four questions directed towards the content of the workshop, and two questions about the potential for future conferences. 93 people answered the evaluation forms provided for seven of the eighteen workshops.

When asked about what was the most important thing the students had heard during the workshop that could help them follow their dreams to success, the majority of responses (43%) indicated that nothing was said to that end. The second place response (20%) revealed that students believed that they needed further training and/or education in their chosen field. The conference did successfully open up interest in career choices,

but did not provide them with answers to the questions they went in with. The students also felt that the traditional and cultural sessions should be part of the curriculum in school rather than just a feature in conference format (Conference Report, 2002: 28), indicating they are interested in identity questions and culture, but their School has not fully responded to this need. One can also say that new developments in the cultural confidence in the youth of this generation has created the need for education in these areas, but their schools have not managed to fulfill and satisfy this demand.

These results also resound in my own experiences at the conference. I found that the conference was a great learning experience that touched on a lot of pertinent issues for youth. However, I felt that the youth were unable to adequately voice their questions. The atmosphere was that of a classroom, rather than a conference. Participants were given the opportunity to choose which workshop they attended, but once they arrived, the format was that of a class lecture/seminar and not a workshop.

The committee felt that the participants did not understand the purpose of the conference or the importance of the messages in the sessions.

“Youth were confused as to what the conference was about, what it had to do with them and why it was being held at all. In spite of this confusion youth wanted to know more about particular traditional practices, career choices and how these related to them once they were involved with the conference”
(Conference Report, 2002: 30).

The committee also stated that the findings of the conference needed to be followed up on if there is going to be another conference, and if so, a more permanent structure must be created to organize them.

What I expected from the conference was very different from what I observed. This led me to conclude that organizers failed to define what they meant and expected of

this conference. The participants were left being passive recipients of information, rather than engaging in meaningful dialogue, where information that they brought to the table could be brought back to the community. Maybe it tried to cover too many aspects in too little time and became more difficult to outline its main goals.

Because of the clear interest in tradition and culture from the students at the conference, the committee suggested students, teachers, and traditional practitioners' join together to find a way to make this knowledge part of the curriculum offered in Kahnawake Survival School (Conference Report, 2002: 29). Again, this shows how the conference ended up being more about learning rather than about creating dialogue with what the youth perceived as their diverse needs. However this should not detract from the importance that they tried to respond to the needs the youth expressed.

When participants were asked if they would like to have another conference in one, two, or three years, the majority of students (84%) said they would want another conference in one year's time. In the future, the goals of the conference should be clearly transmitted to the participants if it wishes to be effective. The report suggests that in the future there should be someone in charge of organizing the event, fundraising should be more formalized, there should be more community involvement, more time for planning should be budgeted, and the intended audience should be understood and targeted accordingly (Conference Report, 2002: 30-34).

In conclusion, I wish I had more direct discussions with some of the youth participants, teachers and the organizing committee, to examine their reflections on the experience.

Conclusion and Summary

The conference days were different from each other in both presentation style and level of formality. On the first day at Survival School, there were more parents and community members participating with students from Survival School. The atmosphere was more relaxed as people moved about between the opening and the tradition/culture sessions. On the second day at Concordia, the participants were less relaxed, concentrating on getting to where they needed to be. The sessions were more spread out and were in different buildings. The atmosphere was also more formal and serious. There were fewer community members and parents at Concordia and the environment was less familiar to teachers and students.

The sessions on empowerment, tradition and culture held at Survival School had an impact on how people interacted with one another. The participants were more comfortable with the presenters and the environment as they were familiar to them. They showed ease in this environment and higher levels of interaction. At Concordia, the students were more reserved in between workshops, spending more time around their teachers in the hallways. The underlying message that participants received as they proceeded through the different sessions was, 'this is who we are and where we come from' and 'gather strength from this as you face where you go and how you get there'. In this way, I observed how Mohawk values shaped the content of the conference, in how it was presented and experienced by the participants.

Because the community has control over how Kahnawake students are taught and to a lesser extent what they are taught, the findings of the conference are important. If realized, they are important indicators of where a significant portion of the population believes the future of education should be directed.

The planning and implementation of the conference is a good example of how the economic need and growth of the community can influence how educational programs are designed. The conference organizers found that Kahnawake youth have an interest in entrepreneurship. It is with this information that Kahnawake Survival School decided to hold entrepreneurial workshops for their senior students so that they may better understand this career option. The next chapter addresses how these workshops came to fruition.

Chapter 7 Entrepreneurial Skills Workshops

Introduction

In this chapter, I will be discussing the entrepreneurial workshops held in May 2002 at Kahnawake Survival School. The workshops were organized for the senior graduating students of Survival school. The students attended the workshops with their Social Studies' teachers and the principal of the school.

After discussing the background of the workshops, I will share my experiences as both a participant and an observer of the workshops. I will review what teachers said about the workshops after they were finished, and what I observed the students doing during them, in order show how the participants experienced the workshops differently.

In the final section, I will discuss how the workshops were an excellent example of community control of education. I will also discuss the values used in shaping the workshops, and how they developed out of a need for economic growth in the community. I will show how the process of decolonizing the minds of the youth meets with resistance from the youth, because of how they view past values and current business trends as being in conflict.

The Entrepreneurial Skills workshops and similar types of projects are examples of how education is being controlled in Kahnawake. Decisions about which curriculums are offered are organized within the community, as there is less bureaucracy to contend with for implementation of the project. Changes to the curriculum can be made faster and reflect the perceived needs of the learning community. However, with respect to this project, there was very little participation from the community or youth. Instead, educational authorities made all the decisions.

Background to the Entrepreneurial Skills project

The idea to conduct entrepreneurial workshops arose from feedback that the Kahnawake Survival School received from participants of the Youth Conference. The final report from the conference revealed that the youth wanted to learn more about entrepreneurial skills. The statistics compiled in the report showed that the primary career choice among students was to be a business owner in the community. Therefore, school administrators felt that they should respond to this need.

Although the majority of the Indigenous people according to national statistics have indicated ownership of business and entrepreneurial occupations to be their employment, they only make up one percent of business among Indigenous employment in Canada. Currently there is no training program in Kahnawake aimed at youth to meet this desire, and perceived conflicting values on entrepreneurial success have impeded any developments in this area. So Kahnawake Survival School and Tewatohnhi'saktha Kahnawake Economic Development Commission jointly decided to create the workshops to fill the gap.

Most businesses in Kahnawake operate out of individual homes, either in a converted garage or room attached to the house. There are 320 businesses presently serving the community in Kahnawake, of which 75% have one employee or no employees. Very little is exported, such as clay and rock, and many more goods are imported such as food staples, oil, electricity, etc. In Kahnawake, there are family businesses such as convenient stores, cigarette stores, restaurants, and the like that sustain individual families rather than large industries or corporations that sustain the community.

There is a potential for larger business ventures in tourism and the Information Technology field, but there is little in the way of natural resources available for a self-

sustained economy (Ryan, notes, 2002). The tourism industry has potential because people are interested in Indigenous culture. Opening up the community to this type of industry can offer people the opportunity to learn about the Indigenous culture from the cultural experts. It can generate a great deal of money in the community directly through tourism, such as tours or historical sites, and indirectly through the industry set up to support it, such as providing lodging and food. There is potential for Information Technology, as the industry is not physically bound to the environment, meaning that setting up an Information Technology company is less about physical resources and more about financial resources (Ryan, notes, 2002).

In 1999, in response to the community's desire for economic development with strict guidelines, the Band council established the Tawatohnhi'saktha Economic Commission. The commission was formed based on a study that was done in the community from which this desire was expressed. The idea was to have a commission that would develop the community's economic growth with their approval thereby maintaining cultural sensitivity, an important consideration for the community.

Statistics¹ recently compiled by the commission show that 70% of people start businesses between the ages of 20 and 24, and 25% start between 25 and 29. Over 60% have entrepreneurial parents, which is where individuals receive their entrepreneurial training. On average, people have five years of work experience prior to starting a self-run business. At the time of their start, these individuals were unemployed (over 50%) the trigger to start a business. The failure rate for first business is 50%, and for a second

¹ Statistics given in Tom O'Connell's entrepreneurial workshop, May 8, 2002

business is 31%. The sources of financing a business break down as follows: 25% from self, 15% from family, 23% from government assistance, and 37% from loans.

A survey commissioned by the Tawatohni'saktha Economic Commission, which was conducted by the Kahnawake Community Consultation Service in 2000 called the "Report on the Community Consultation on a Commercial site designated for Economic Development", showed that there is disagreement in the community as to the direction economic development should take. There is a strong perception that the Mohawk culture cannot mix with business, and if it does, that there will be an encroachment of non-Indigenous values in the community.

The fact that the Mohawk Council of Kahnawake (Band council) and the Tawatohni'saktha Economic Commission are mistrusted² in the community does not improve this perception either. This mistrust exists for the same reason that the community mistrusts the KCSC as was seen in the chapter on the Education Park project. It is another example of the larger issue within the community, of how the value of individuality is given more credence in everyday life than the needs of the community. Any time the Band council has attempted to start a business, the community has opposed it because of the belief that the project will only benefit a selected few in the community and the Band Council. This can be seen with projects such as the building of a Casino, which was shelved twice by community votes, both times with low voter turnout. The Tawatohni'saktha, started by the band council is accorded the same mistrust. Community members are hesitant to use the commission's resources.

² Tawatohni'saktha Economic Commission is mistrusted because they are a division of the band council.

The report surveyed 1240 out of 1800 households, which included the voices of the community's youth. They included the youth by asking each household if they could interview any youths that lived there. The survey revealed a strong perception in the community that economic development meant bringing in non-Indigenous people into the community. The belief is that non-Indigenous people will then take control of any development that takes place and will be the only one's who benefit from it. They believe that non-Indigenous people threaten the community. "There is concern by youth that economic development will encourage an influx of non-Indigenous people, as tourists, who could threaten our safety and security in the community" (KCCS, 2000: 28). Ironically, the person hired to give the entrepreneurial skills workshops was a non-Indigenous person and in a way, was re-enforcing community fears.

The report reveals that there is very little desire to work with adjacent communities in economic development. Rather, there is a strong interest in improving relations between community members before any type of business venture is actualized. This finding also influenced the decision to have the youth conference and the entrepreneurial workshops. By providing them with the opportunity to learn about entrepreneurship in a hands-on way in a workshop setting, it was thought that the youth would be better suited to participate in the future economic development of the community.

Workshops

The Entrepreneurial Skills workshops were organized by Survival School in collaboration with the Tewaohni'saktha Economic Commission. One presenter was hired from the John Molson School of Business of Concordia University to conduct the

workshops. Over a number of years, the presenter had worked with Tewatohnni'saktha, presenting the same type of workshops to the general community, at one of the community centers for a number of years.

There were three 2-hour workshops offered in May of 2002. The workshops were conducted in the Kahnawake Survival School library during the scheduled time when students are usually in their Social Studies class. The workshops were organized into PowerPoint presentations designed to elicit discussions on the concepts of the entrepreneurial process. Unfortunately, the information did not seem to grasp the student's attention as some students were listening with heads down, others' looking forward at him, all not asking or answering any questions.

Eighteen Grade 11 (sixteen to seventeen year olds) students attended the three workshops. Out of the group, only three students showed any interest in the material being presented. Only these three students interacted with the presenter before, during, and/or after the workshops. The two Social Studies teachers were present through out the workshops as well as the principal of the school.

The format of the workshops was primarily to understand the theoretical issues involved in entrepreneurship, and then to apply them to a business plan. The first workshop was set up to explain the issues. The presenter went through the theoretical framework to starting a business. The second workshop was set up to go over ideas that the students had for a business and to develop a business plan together as a group. The third workshop was set up so that the students could come up with an idea for a business and implement that idea into a business plan individually and discuss it in the workshop.

The workshop PowerPoint presentations detailed the process of entrepreneurship from the stage of generating an idea for a business to its implementation. The presenter went through each step presenting the resources available to youth in Kahnawake to start a summer business, such as start up loans and product marketability in the community.

The presenter used scenarios of other types of youth businesses that had been started in other Indigenous communities, in Canada as well as in Kahnawake, to initiate discussions. He asked questions to the group about what their perceptions of the community wants and needs were in terms of products.

He briefly touched on how the community typically responds negatively to individual business success stories. He used the example of Lafleurs Golf Course, a highly successful business operation that generates a great deal of income in the community. Unfortunately, the family that runs the business is not appreciated as successful within the community. The sentiment is that with success comes the desire to show it off, by making large expensive purchases.

Having these workshops following the youth conference indicates the community's commitment of maintaining control over education and curriculum. This is important to the community because they are able to meet the educational needs of the students, as they arise. Except, the community had very little input in the decisions made about the workshops being offered, meaning that the experts in the community, namely the school administration and the economic commission shaped the content of these workshops. Inasmuch as the youth were originally asked about their thoughts on a commercial site in a survey conducted in 2000, they were not directly asked if they would be interested in participating in the Entrepreneurial workshops at the youth conference.

Evaluation

After the workshops were over, I spoke with some of the teachers who participated in the workshops. One teacher pointed out that the kids were misbehaving and/or not paying attention because they normally cannot go past 45 minutes without taking a break. The workshops were a solid 2 hours without stopping. The teachers were present to make sure that the students were behaving. They did not participate in the workshop, only speaking when the need arose to reprimand a student. The principal's participation served more as an icebreaker, giving the students an opportunity to speak with him in the workshop, when the students did not answer the presenter's questions.

Another teacher said that they were probably getting bored because the presenter was not conducting the workshop in a language that they could understand, 'teen talk'. She raised another point in reference to the presenter's comments on how successes in the community are regarded. She said, "if you keep telling the kids that those who succeed in town get called down, they are not going to try and succeed and they'll stop listening."

I also observed some of the behaviors the students displayed during the workshop. As the workshop progressed, more heads were put on the desk. There was no interaction between the students and the presenter, although the students paid more attention when the presenter told stories to convey his points. He continuously used the example of drug usage as a negative. Some students yawned at this comment whenever he said it, indicating that they do not accept his example and reliance on a stereotype. The kids began to get restless at noon. The presenter noticed this and tried to get them thinking about creating their summer jobs. He asked for ideas from the students but no one responded. The silence is broken by a couple of girls giggling, and then the principal kicked in with an example of a summer job he came up with when he was a kid. The

presenter then asked that the kids come up with business ideas for the next time they meet so that they can go through process of how to get stuff started (Ryan, notes, 2002). What these observations demonstrated to me was that, while the workshops were intended to respond to the needs expressed by the youth at the conference, they were unsuitable for young people, revealing that the youth were not sufficiently involved in the pedagogy of the workshops or the youth conference. Not enough sensitivity was put into the process and pedagogy of the workshop to ensure that it was interactive and interesting for the youth. Had they been, they would have been more participation.

Conclusion and Summary

In summary, Survival School held a number of workshops on entrepreneurial skills in May 2002 with the hope of sparking student interest on the subject. The workshops were developed after organizers from Survival School determined that this was an interest for students. Inasmuch as it was an interest, it seemed that the students wanted the information to be presented to them in a way that reflected their needs and realities. Perhaps by considering their interests more, and increasing their ability to participate, might have achieved this.

The participation level in these workshops was low either because the students were not being enticed by the information given, or because of a predisposition towards refusing the process, based on their mistrust of who controls economic development in Kahnawake.

In general, the community does not trust the economic development process adopted in the community. Because economic development is the responsibility of the Band council, any project is usually met with apprehension. The only way to convince

community members of a project's feasibility is to see it work, but often they are too busy blocking any development for there to be a success story for them to then believe in. Perhaps because Tewatohnhi'saktha has joined up with Survival School, they will be more acceptable to the community. Hopefully, if this joint venture continues, the youth will take the opportunity to resolve the perceived conflict between business and Mohawk culture.

If the community is to become self-sufficient, the path to entrepreneurship needs to be a viable option to youth. The problem with this is that the community fears this type of growth will encroach upon their way of life. Therefore, any developments that are made to meet this need are met with apprehension. Anything above a family storefront is "called down". So the workshop fulfills the need for more knowledge on how to start and run a business but does little to address the apprehension the community feels towards business and contact with non-Indigenous people.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

The history of Indigenous relations in Canada has led the Indigenous population to mistrust the Canadian government with respect to the role the government has chosen for itself. This mistrust has ignited a reaction with Indigenous people who are actively seeking to take control of their institutions. One of the largest movements in this regard, sees Indigenous communities across Canada taking over the education of their youth by starting their own schools that teach Indigenous values and language along side provincial curriculums.

The focus of this thesis has been to examine how the Indigenous community of Kahnawake has taken over the education of its youth. By examining how this has occurred in Kahnawake and what the process means for the community, the hope was to provide an understanding of how this is an example of a process known as the decolonization of the mind. With a focus on the history of the educational movement, the role the community places on education, as well as how the schools are responding to the needs of the students has been examined.

The process of reclaiming education was examined in this thesis by briefly discussing the history of Indigenous relations and Indigenous education in both Canada and the community of Kahnawake. The purpose was to reveal how these histories have shaped the community today. I then focused on three events that took place in the community between 2002 and 2003. I participated in these events, and interviewed community members about them, with the goal of providing an understanding of how the process of community control of education is enacted as well as how it is perceived in the community.

The first event examined was the education park project, which generated discussions in the community about how community members perceived the education of their youth. The discussions were heated and the community was divided on how educational needs should be addressed. The issues put forth revealed conflicts between those who participated in the decision making process, what community divisions existed and their origins, and illustrated some of the hurdles the community faces in the process of decolonization.

The second event that was explored was a youth conference that took place at Survival School, the Mohawk high school in Kahnawake. The purpose of the conference was to provide a forum about the future in terms of careers choices and availability in the community in way that reflects a Mohawk identity through culture and values. The conference was a venue to determine how educational programs are designed to meet the needs of the community. By taking control of education, educational administrators in the community are able to implement changes to curriculum quickly, assessing needs and developing programs to meet those needs as required.

The third event that was examined was an example of a program developed to meet a perceived need raised at the youth conference. The program was a series of workshops developed for the senior class at the Survival School whose focus was to teach students how to develop entrepreneurial skills, and apply these skills in their lives. Participating in these workshops along side the students, it became clear that information was not reaching the students, either because they were not interested or they did not value how or why it was presented to them.

The community of Kahnawake has built an education system for the community that provides a process for them to reclaim their history, tradition, and languages. Regardless of whether or not projects and programs succeed, it is the community who is responsible for them, and this is integral part of community control of education. Full control of education would mean full fiscal responsibility, this can only become a reality in time and is dependent on other movements that are taking place in Indigenous communities across Canada.

The Education Park project is an example of how decolonization of the mind in the community is being negotiated. Even though the project itself has been shelved, the discussions around the project did provide school administrators with more of an understanding of what the concerns and issues are for the community.

Language acquisition is an important factor in education for the community, and it is through the Mohawk language that the community desires to have decolonization take place. This is why attention is given to language development rather than its dissemination.

Mistrust and community divisions are affecting how decolonization of the mind is being negotiated. What is being reconstructed as tradition, and what is to be retained from Euro-Canadian culture is under dispute. Decolonizing Mohawk minds in education is a process that will not be realized in a short period of time, rather it is a process that is ongoing and will be part of establishing what is taught to Mohawk students for many generations to come.

The youth conference is an example of decolonization of the mind as the conference successfully integrated perceived and agreed upon Mohawk traditions in a

Euro-Canadian format of dissemination. By holding a conference, the organizers were recognizing something in Euro-Canadian culture that they wanted to retain, and present to the students. Using this type of venue to present the traditional practices of the sweat lodge building and personal medicine, as well as Mohawk values used in selecting role models, addressing bullying, and how to see the communities assets and liabilities, reveals how decolonization is taking place as the next generation learns how to negotiate this process too.

The Entrepreneurial Skills workshop illustrates how the community is initiating programs that offer a venue for the youth to start the process of negotiating decolonizing their own minds. Students were given the opportunity to think about how they could balance their Mohawk values with what they were learning about entrepreneurship.

All three events show how decolonization of the mind is taking place in the community of Kahnawake in how they are taking control of education. As the community prepares to take on more responsibilities and negotiates with the federal and provincial government for more control over their lives, they will continue to do so in a way that is defined by them. With a framework for the process of decolonization of the mind, control over their institutions can be achieved just as it is with education.

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Appendix 1

Questions for Interviews

Personal History

Where were you born?

Where did you go to school?

What religion were you raised with and are you practicing today?

Do you have children?

If yes, where do they go to school?

Why did you choose that school?

Do you have ties to any of the schools in Kahnawake today?

If so what are they?

Are you or were you ever involved in the Combined Schools Committee?

Community Educational History

Did you participate in the Survival School Walk out in the 1970's?

If yes, what was your role?

What were your impressions of the whole event?

Are the same issues that were relevant when Survival school opened relevant today?

Pedagogy and Curriculum

What are your feelings about expanding curriculum to include drama courses or music, art courses, business entrepreneurship workshops, economics, cultural studies, and or language skills?

Do you think that what's being taught in Kahnawake schools today, is going to help employment rates in Kahnawake in the future?

If you had a vision of the future of Kahnawake education where would you like to see it go?

Education Park

What did you think of the mega-school project?

What problems if any do you see with it?

What do you think the solutions are?

Did you see the questionnaire and information project that was put out by the KCSC?

Did you go to the poll?

Did you see the final report?

What do you think will happen to the schools now the project has been closed down?

Language

What role do you think the Mohawk language should play in schools?

What about in the community?

What role does it play in your life?

What role does French play in the schools?

What are your impressions of the Quebec Nursing licensing bureau's decision to not accept the degree issued by KSS to one of its students because the student did not have adequate French language skills?