

CARRYING THE BURDEN OF PEACE: THE MOHAWKS, THE CANADIAN FORCES, AND THE OKA CRISIS

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Contrary to the militaristic and soldierly associations of the term in European languages – and in common usage – the words translated from indigenous languages as “warrior” generally have deep and spiritual meaning. This deeper sense is exemplified, to use one example, in the English-Kanienkeha translation, *rotiskenhrakete*, which literally means, “carrying the burden of peace.”

-- Taiaiake Alfred and Lana Lowe, *Warrior Societies* (2005)

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The “Indian Summer” of 1990 profoundly changed the perception of Aboriginal-government relations in Canada. Elijah Harper defeated the Meech Lake Accord in the Manitoba Legislature, his eagle feather becoming a symbol for peaceful Native resistance and the unwillingness of Aboriginal people to tolerate their concerns being relegated to the political margins. The complex and prolonged confrontation at Oka, Quebec, proved even more destabilizing, suggesting that Aboriginal communities were volatile powder kegs that could erupt into open violence. The Mohawks had long asserted title over a parcel of land known as “the Pines,” but their failure to secure a favourable resolution through the official land claims process during the 1970s and 1980s made a bad situation worse. When impatient members of the local Euro-Canadian community initiated plans to build a private golf course on the disputed property, Mohawks erected barricades to stymie development. The conflict escalated into an eleven-week standoff between Mohawk Warriors, the Quebec provincial police and the armed forces, and drew unprecedented political and media attention. The lesson learned: when negotiations break down, land claims can lead to armed confrontation and violence, even in the peaceable kingdom of Canada.

If the *rotiskenhrakete* (Warriors) claimed to “carry the burden of peace,” so too did the members of the Canadian Forces who were called upon to stabilize the situation in an aid to the civil power capacity. Canadians, accustomed to seeing their soldiers serve as proud peacekeepers abroad, instead watched them perform “a traditional form of peace-restoration at home” from August-October 1990.² The armed forces and Aboriginal peoples were visibly on opposite sides of the proverbial fence, an image etched into the Canadian psyche by the provocative photograph of Private Patrick

² Col. J.D. Harries, “Peacekeeping Futures,” *Canadian Defence Quarterly* (October, 1991), p. 27.

Cloutier caught in the fiery glare of a Mohawk Warrior.³ A sober, balanced assessment recognizes that the Canadian Forces (CF) performed admirably during the Oka Crisis and professionally moderated a volatile situation without resorting to bloodshed.

Given the plethora of existing overviews that chronicle the crisis,⁴ this article will not provide a comprehensive, chronological overview of the political and operational developments through the summer and early fall of 1990. Nor does it attempt to narrate and apply the themes of colonization, non-Native dispossession of Aboriginal lands, alleged state-sponsored aggression against indigenous peoples, or the politics of ethno-cultural survival. Other commentators have discussed these subjects in detail.⁵ Instead, this article situates the military's involvement in historical context, and provides an analytical survey of themes pertaining to CF leadership during Operation SALON. Drawing upon after action reports recently obtained through Access to Information, as well as published first-hand assessments of the operation, it assesses the

³ When it was over, journalists, documentary filmmakers, poets and Aboriginal spokespersons seemed to ignore the reserve displayed by the CF, and remembered the confrontation as a quintessential example of perpetual governmental injustice. See, for example, *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance*, dir. Alanis Obomsawin, National Film Board of Canada, 1993, videocassette; Donna Goldleaf, *Entering the Warzone: A Mohawk Perspective on Resisting Invasions* (Penticton: Theytus Books, 1995).

⁴ The vast literature on Oka in English includes Michael Baxendale and Craig MacLaine. *This Land is Our Land: the Mohawk Revolt at Oka* (Montreal: Optimum Publishing, 1990); Canada, Parliament, House of Commons. Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, *The Summer of 1990: Fifth Report of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs* (Ottawa, 1991); John Ciaccia, *Oka Crisis: A Mirror of the Soul* (Dorval, QB: Maren Publications, 2000); Donna Goodleaf, *Entering the War Zone: A Mohawk Perspective on Resisting Invasions* (Penticton, BC: Theytus Books, 1995); Rick Hornung, *One Nation Under the Gun: Inside the Mohawk Civil War* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1991); Linda Pertusati, *In Defense of Mohawk Land: Ethnopolitical Conflict in Native North America* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997); and Geoffrey York and Loreen Pindera. *People of the Pines: The Warriors and the Legacy of Oka* (Toronto: MacArthur and Company, 1991). Books in French include Gilles Boileau, *Silence des messieurs : Oka, terre indienne* (Montréal: Méridien, 1991); John Ciaccia, *Crise d'Oka : miroir de notre ame : essai* (Montréal: Leméac, 2000); Francois Dallaire, *Oka : la hache de guerre* (Ste-Foy, QB: Editions de la Liberté, 1991); Jacques-A. Lamarche, *L'Eté de Mohawks : bilan des 78 jours* (Montréal: Stanké, 1990); Robin Philpot, *Oka : dernier alibi du Canada anglais* (Montréal: VLB, 1991); and Hélène Sévigny, *Lasagne : l'homme derrière le masque* (Saint-Lambert, PQ: Editions Sedes, 1993). Documentary films include *Acts of defiance* (Montreal: National Film Board of Canada, 1992); *Kanehsatake : 270 ans de résistance* (Montreal: Office national du film du Canada) / *Kanehsatake : 270 years of resistance* (Montreal: National Film Board of Canada, 1993); *Spudwrench: Kahnawake Man* (Montreal : National Film Board of Canada, c1997); and *My name is Kahentiosta* (Montreal : National Film Board, 1995).

⁵ For relevant introductions, see Taiaiake Alfred, *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 1999); J.R. Miller, *Lethal Legacy: Current Native Controversies in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 2004); Alan C. Cairns, *Citizens Plus: Aboriginal Peoples and the Canadian State* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000), and Tom Flanagan, *First Nations? Second Thoughts* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000).

characteristics that made SALON a particularly complex Internal Security (IS) operation. The professionalism displayed by the Canadian Forces at Oka, rooted in rigorous training and strong leadership, allowed the military to restore order in a stressful and volatile situation without loss of life. Furthermore, a proactive communications strategy and media plan allowed the military to win the “media war” for the hearts and minds of most Canadians. In the end, the CF’s credible and confident media strategy was successful in both controlling the flow of information from the area of operations and evoking an image of military superiority. As a result, the crisis was resolved and the CF successfully managed to “carry the burden of peace.”

Background to the Oka Crisis

Historian Jim Miller notes that a fixation on specific, immediate factors leading to the Oka crisis provides limited explanation of this complex affair. Indeed, commentary during and immediately following the crisis was largely superficial:

The Mohawk Warrior Society is portrayed either as a collection of righteous militants pursuing a sacred constitutional principle or as a band of goons. The local residents of Oka and Chateauguay are long-suffering neighbours or red-necked hooligans. The Surete du Quebec are uniformed thugs or inexperienced law enforcement officers trying to mediate in a hopelessly polarized situation. Quebec is either the most tolerant and generous of provinces in its treatment of Aboriginal peoples or the home of a nationality becoming increasingly unwilling to permit dissent by distinctive ethnic and racial minorities. Ottawa is to blame either for mollycoddling the Mohawk with promises of accommodation after their claims were rejected, or for failing to act decisively.... Where in this welter of charges and counter-charges do the roots of the exceptional and lamentable eleven-week stand-off at Kanesatake lie?⁶

In March 1990, provincial courts gave the the town of Oka the “go-ahead” to extend a nine-hole golf course into an eighteen-hole course through a disputed piece of

⁶ J.R. Miller, “Great White Father Knows Best: Oka and the Land Claims Process,” *Native Studies Review*, 7(1) (1991), pp. 24-25.

land known locally as “the Pines.” The Mohawks of the Kanesatake settlement adjacent to the town⁷ claimed the land as their own, maintaining that it was both part of their traditional hunting grounds and a sacred burial ground. Armed with this belief, the Mohawks rejected the decision of the court and, on 11 March 1990, they erected a barricade blocking would-be developers’ entry into the Pines. Armed Mohawk men took up positions at the barricade and made it clear that no one would be permitted to access the area without a fight.⁸ So began a seven month struggle between the Mohawk, the province of Québec, the government of Canada, and the town of Oka.

The question of why the Mohawk of the Kanesatake Settlement and the town of Oka both claimed ownership of the same piece of land can only be answered by looking at the historical antecedents of the conflict. Historians generally agree that the trouble began in 1717 when the land, then referred to as the Lake of Two Mountains, or Kanesatake, was granted to the Seminary of St. Sulpice to be used as a refuge for the largely Mohawk population within their mission.⁹ These Mohawks were relocated from the area of Sault-au-Recollet because of the Sulpicians’ concerns that their involvement in the fur trade – particularly their exposure to alcohol - would be morally dangerous to them.¹⁰ The Mohawks themselves readily agreed to the move because the land to which they were moving was part of their traditional hunting grounds and the Sulpicians

⁷ The Mohawk community of Kanesatake is located on the north shore of Lake of Two-Mountains, where it meets the Ottawa River, 53 km west of Montreal. The lands set aside for the Mohawks do not constitute a reserve, and are interwoven with lands belonging to non-aboriginal people of the village and parish of Oka. The surface area of Kanesatake is 958.05 hectares. The community also includes the Doncaster Reserve, an uninhabited territory of 7,896.2 hectares located 14 km north of Sainte-Agathe-des-Monts, north-west of Lac-des-Îles, which is shared with the Mohawks of Kahnawake. INAC, Fact Sheet: Kanesatake (2000).

⁸ Craig MacLaine and Michael Baxendale, *This Land is Our Land: the Mohawk Revolt at Oka*, (Toronto: Optimum Publishing International Inc., 1991), p. 12.

⁹ See Jane Dickson-Gilmore, “Always About the Land: The Oka Crisis of 1990” on *Canada: Confederation to Present* eds. Bob Hesketh and Chris Hackett [CD-ROM] (Edmonton: Chinook Multimedia, 2001) and Miller, “Great White Father,” pp. 23-51.

¹⁰ Gilmore, “Always About the Land,” p. 5.

promised that they would be given the land and would no longer be “molested in [their] habitation.” The Mohawks accepted this promise and recorded the transaction in a wampum belt; however, there was no written record of the agreement. This omission later became a problem when the Sulpicians claimed that they owned the land in trust for the Native peoples and could provide written documentation for their position. The Mohawks’ belief that they legitimately owned the land was based on historical use and on the Sulpicians’ verbal promises.¹¹

Over the course of the eighteenth century the relationship between the Sulpicians and the Mohawks soured. Though the two groups farmed the land and planted the treed area which is now known as ‘the Pines,’ there was increasing discord over Mohawk use of agricultural and timber resources.¹² “Shepherds can’t be landlords,” one commentator pointed out. “When the Sulpicians had to choose between tending their flock and looking out for their property, the landowner won out.”¹³ Following the Conquest of New France in 1759, Mohawks presented their land claims to the British authorities in 1781, 1787 and 1795. Although their claims were rejected, the Mohawks continued to press the issue and disputes continued throughout the nineteenth century when denominational differences exacerbated an already tense situation. By 1869 the majority of the Mohawk population in the area had converted to Protestantism. Miller explains that this conversion was a “symbolic act of rejection and defiance,”¹⁴ which angered the Sulpicians. Other disputes over matters like the sale of timber from the area were amplified accordingly. In 1877 the Catholic Church at Oka

¹¹ *Ibid*, pp. 5-6.

¹² Richard C. Daniel, *A History of Native Land Claims Processes in Canada 1867-1979* (Ottawa: Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Research Branch, 1980), pp. 78-79.

¹³ Quoted in Peggy Curran, “Oka Dispute Reaches into Mists of Canada’s History,” *The Gazette*, 14 July 1990, p. B1.

¹⁴ Miller, “Great White Father,” pp. 27 and 30.

burned to the ground and the Sulpicians blamed the Mohawks. Over fifty Mohawk were arrested for the crime but no one was convicted. Predictably, the prosecutions did little to alleviate the distrust between the two groups. The Natives at Kanesatake were offered alternative land at Maniwaki and Doncaster in the 1880s, and the Algonquins and Nipissing departed, as did approximately twenty-five Mohawk families who left for a reserve at Gibson's, Ontario. The majority of Mohawks stayed, however, reiterating that the land belonged to them and not the Sulpicians.¹⁵

Tensions between the remaining Mohawks and the Sulpicians at Kanesatake persisted into the twentieth century. The Judicial Committee of Privy Council in London (the highest appellate court in the Empire) affirmed once more that the land rightfully belonged to the Seminary in the 1909 case of *Corinth et al. v. The Seminary of St. Sulpice*. In the 1930s, the Seminary began selling off parcels of the land to pay off various debts. In 1933, for example, the Sulpicians transferred over one hundred lots to repay a debt of \$1,025,000 to the province of Quebec. This land was later sold to the municipality of Oka for one dollar. The province also sold land to a Belgian company that refused to negotiate amiably with the resident Aboriginal population.¹⁶

In 1945, in an attempt to settle the problem once and for all, Ottawa negotiated an agreement with the Sulpicians to purchase land for the remaining Mohawks at Oka. This appeared, on the surface, to represent an effective means of settling the issue, but disagreement and misunderstanding prevailed. Non-Mohawks assumed that the Native population would confine themselves to a 1556-acre parcel set aside by the government. For their part, the Mohawks did not believe that this sale resolved the

¹⁵ Gilmore, "Always About the Land," 7, and Miller, "Great White Father," 32; Serge Laurin, "Les 'troubles d'oka' ou l'histoire d'une résistance (1760-1945), *Recherches amérindiennes au Québec* 21/1-2 (1991), pp. 87-94.

¹⁶ Gilmore, "Always About the Land," 7; Miller, "Great White Father," p. 36.

original question of ownership of the Pines and, moreover, it relegated them to an area of two and one-half square miles; they had once occupied over sixty four square miles. In addition, the government did not set the land aside as a legal reserve, so the settlement was vulnerable to future encroachment by the non-Native population in the area. Regardless, the federal government considered the case to be closed. The Mohawks disagreed. When the municipality of Oka decided in 1958 to build a nine-hole golf course on land it had purchased from the Sulpicians in 1945, the Mohawks (who were not consulted) believed they were well within their rights to protest the development. They appealed to the Minister of Indian Affairs to prevent the creation of the golf-course. Indian Affairs promptly referred the matter to the Department of Justice, who decided in the town's favour. The golf course went ahead, located immediately adjacent to the Pines.¹⁷

By this time, the Mohawk community was divided into factions: those who supported the band council government and favoured cooperation with the Canadian authorities, and those "traditionalists" who advocated increased autonomy rooted in traditional Iroquois-style governance and a confrontationist strategy.¹⁸ These currents surfaced during a time of changing official policies. Native groups' hostile response to the ill-fated White Paper of 1969, coupled with court decisions recognizing aboriginal title in the early 1970s, led the federal government to reconsider its stance on land claims.¹⁹ In August 1973, it announced a new policy which confirmed the government's

¹⁷ Miller, "Great White Father," p. 36.

¹⁸ Gerald F. Reid, *Kahnawà:ke: Factionalism, Traditionalism, and Nationalism in a Mohawk Community* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).

¹⁹ In the *Calder Case* (1973) the Supreme Court of Canada split in recognizing the aboriginal land title of the Nisga'a in northwestern British Columbia, and in the same year the Yukon Indian Brotherhood presented a formal claim to the federal government, Justice Morrow of the NWT recognized the aboriginal title of the Dene of the Mackenzie River Valley, and Justice

responsibility to meet its lawful treaty obligations (specific claims) and to negotiate settlements with Native groups in areas where Canada had not extinguished rights based on traditional use and occupancy of the land (comprehensive claims). The new land claims policy emphasized provincial and territorial co-operation. In 1975, the Mohawks of Kanesatake, in conjunction with the communities at Kahnawake and Akwesasne, submitted a comprehensive claim²⁰ asserting aboriginal title to lands along the St. Lawrence and Ottawa rivers. It was rejected almost immediately for two main reasons. First, the Mohawks had not maintained possession of these lands since time immemorial and therefore could not claim aboriginal title. Second, Indian Affairs and Northern Development concluded that any aboriginal title that might have existed had been extinguished by the King of France, who had granted the land to the Seminary of St. Sulpice, and later by the British Crown. When this claim was rejected, the Mohawks tried another course of action. In June 1977, they submitted a specific claim to the lands at Oka. In 1986, they received notice from the federal government that it recognized no outstanding lawful obligation. The Minister of Indian Affairs did note, however, that he would consider alternative means to address the Kanesatake band's grievances, outside of the formal claims process.²¹

The following year, the matter came to a head when the Kanesatake band council learned through the media that the town of Oka planned to allow an expansion of the golf course into the Pines. The council protested to municipal and provincial

Malouf of Québec recognized the title of the Cree and Inuit of Québec. Although these decisions were later overturned, they gave important weight to the Aboriginal rights lobby.

²⁰ Comprehensive land claim agreements are based on the concept of continuing Aboriginal rights and title which have not been dealt with by treaty or any other legal means, and thus can be seen as the modern 'treaty-making process.' The negotiations and settlements deal with land ownership; management of lands and underground resources; harvest of and management rights for wildlife, fish and forests; economic development; access rights; and financial compensations.

²¹ Indian and Northern Affairs Backgrounder: Oka Land Claim, July 1990.

officials to no avail. Even the appointment of a federal mediator to work with the Mohawks and the municipality failed to break the impasse. Legal scholar Jane Dickson-Gilmore concluded that the conflict was “always about the land” – that it was “three hundred years of crisis” over the status of the land culminating in “78 days of conflict.” Linda Perusati drew a different conclusion, suggesting that the crisis was really an expression of ethno-politics: an assertion of Mohawk sovereignty and independence. This echoes Taiiake Alfred, whose studies about the assertion of Mohawk nationalism reveal that, by the 1990s, Mohawk ethno-nationalist politics had evolved from localized goals aimed at stability, to reformative and sovereigntist goals. The purpose of Mohawk activism was to expose the contradictions of colonialism and secure autonomy from the state. Although Gerald Reid has demonstrated that Alfred paints his picture “with strokes too broad to reveal the fine grain of the community’s internal political and cultural dynamics,” the divided community was home to a sizeable faction inclined to a confrontational stance toward the Canadian government.²² The issue was not confined to the land title issue itself, but to the broader issue of aboriginal self-government and the eventual resumption of Mohawk sovereignty. The members of the Warrior Society who manned the barricades asserted that they embodied traditional Mohawk values and offered a viable political alternative to an unfavourable status quo.

The Warriors

Mohawk scholar Taiiake Alfred insists that the Mohawk Warrior Society is an “authentic” and “organic” expression of “timeless indigenous values,” and that its

²² Gerald R. Alfred, *Heeding the Voice of our Ancestors: Kahnawake Mohawk Politics and the Rise of Native Nationalism* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1995), 187-89; Reid, *Kahnawà:ke*, p. 186, *passim*.

membership, strategy and tactics are “bound to the territory and community ... they exist to protect.” As a “security force” a warrior society will adopt any offensive or defensive positions that the situation warrants to either repossess and reassert jurisdiction, or to defend the territory from external encroachments. “The ultimate goal of the warrior society is to defend indigenous lands and people from external threats, particularly state authorities, in order to achieve justice and eventually peace,” Alfred explains. “To achieve this goal, the warrior society’s objectives are three: 1) organize a group of indigenous people who are ready, willing and able to physically defend the land and the people at all times, 2) maintain a presence in the community representative of a warrior ethic, and 3) develop a political, cultural and ideological consciousness that is rooted in the territory and traditions of the community/nation in which it originates.” Alfred asserts that the responsibilities of warriors to defend their people against external violence are rooted in “an ethical framework rooted in traditional cultural values and always considered within the context of self-defence in response to immediate threats of violence to communities or persons.” As “a loosely knit fraternity” based in a community, the Mohawk Warrior Society does not need to organize extensively, but can “galvanize and mobilize a larger, peripheral membership if necessary. The core group maintains the organization and acts as central command during times of crisis.”²³

The *Rotiskenhrakete* or Mohawk Warrior Society emerged at Akwesasne and Kahnawake in the late 1960s, during a time of rekindled Aboriginal activism in North America. The Red Power movement was raising awareness about oppression and discrimination against Aboriginal peoples in general through “civil rights” tactics (such as sit-ins, rallies and marches). The American Indian Movement (AIM), founded in 1968,

²³ Quoted in Alfred and Lowe, “Warrior Societies,” pp. 13 and 36.

adopted more militant strategies, and embraced the term “warrior society” to promote the fight against non-Native authorities. That same year, Mohawks blockaded the St. Lawrence Seaway bridge at Akwesasne, near Cornwall, Ontario, and the Kahnawake Singing Society adopted the term “warrior society” to describe themselves. Alfred suggests that the Mohawk Warrior Society’s “overall strategy was to repossess and protect Kanien’kehaka territories according to the *Kaienerekoawa*, the Great Law of Peace” – a code of conduct handed down orally which provides detailed instructions on when and how to go to war against foreign nations. Armed with a highly idealistic desire to protect cultural values and assert Mohawk claims to sovereignty, and trained by war veterans, the Warriors began to take action. Following the example of the Red Power activists who occupied Alcatraz in 1969, Warriors “reclaimed” Stanley and Loon Islands in the St. Lawrence River. They also clashed with the elected Mohawk band councils, adopted aggressive tactics including barricades and roadblocks to prevent Canadian and American authorities from entering their territories, and occupied/repossessed lands within Kanien’kehaka territory.²⁴ The Kahnawake Warriors allied with AIM and clashed with Quebec provincial police in 1973 during the “siege at the Longhouse,” at which time both men and women brandished guns for the first time and flipped over SQ cars. The Warriors’ confidence grew. The Kahnawake Longhouse sanctioned the

²⁴ For a laudatory introduction to the Mohawk Warriors, which describes them as ethically-grounded actors, see Taiaiake Alfred and Lana Lowe, “Warrior Societies in Contemporary Indigenous Societies,” a background paper prepared for the Ipperwash Inquiry (May 2005). Available online at http://www.ipperwashinquiry.ca/policy_part/policing/pdf/Alfred_and_Lowe.pdf (last accessed 15 Jun 06). For a critical introduction, see “The Long Fall of the Mohawk Warriors” (Toronto: The Mackenzie Institute, 2006), available online at “http://www.mackenzieinstitute.com/1996/1996_06_Military_Mohawks.html (last accessed 28 Jun 06).

Mohawk Warrior Society and, backed by AIM, began to evict non-Native “trespassers” living on the reserve. The local and national media began to take note.²⁵

During the 1970s and 1980s, the Warrior Society expanded into neighbouring Mohawk communities and engaged in the lucrative cigarette trade to generate revenues. “After hours sales of alcohol, high stakes bingo, and slot machines have operated in defiance of the efforts of both traditional and elected Mohawk governments,” one reporter observed. “Canadian and American governments, while occasionally invading and assaulting such activities in a blundering way, have generally frustrated the regulatory efforts of Mohawk governments. By-laws regulating arms have been repealed in the name of Mohawk sovereignty, thus strengthening the Warriors’ Society’s armed protection of gambling casinos.”²⁶ These activities, clearly illegal in the eyes of outside authorities, prompted government action. In 1988, two hundred RCMP officers raided cigarette stores at Kahnawake, prompting Warriors to seize the Mercier Bridge for twenty-nine hours. NY State Troopers raided gaming and cigarette establishments on the other side of the international border the following year. The Warriors established the Mohawk Sovereign Security Force – an armed patrol – to prevent further government incursions on their lands. The force did not prevent further internal violence, however. Rick Hornung describes in *One Nation Under the Gun* how factional conflicts over the control of gaming and the cigarette trade (and those residents who opposed both activities) led to heavy fighting with automatic weapons and even

²⁵ Geoffrey York and Loreen Pindera, *People of the Pines: The Warriors and the Legacy of Oka* (Toronto: MacArthur and Company, 1991), p. 174. Louis Hall (Karoniaktajeh) was a major inspiration to the Warrior societies of the 1970s, designing the Warrior flag and writing the *Warriors Hand Book*. For a Warriors’ perspective on this period, see wii’nimkiikaa, “The Mohawk Warrior Tradition,” <http://itwillbethundering.resist.ca/issue1/mohawkwarriortraditional.shtml> (last accessed 28 Jun 2006). The (in)famous efforts by the American Indian Movement (AIM) to back a Sioux independence movement at Wounded Knee, South Dakota in 1973, served as a tactical model for militant groups after 1974.

²⁶ John Bacher, “Roots of the Mohawk Crisis,” *Peace Magazine* (Oct/Nov 1990), p. 7.

grenades.²⁷ The small fifteen-member Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service was overwhelmed following the murder of two Mohawks at Akwesasne and significant property damage. The challenge of policing a diverse First Nation, which harboured “highly sophisticated and powerful organized criminal elements,” became starkly apparent.²⁸ Order on the reserve was temporarily restored by sizable numbers of Ontario Provincial and RCMP police officers, supported with CF armoured vehicles, secure communications, and engineer services such as rafts and high-speed inflatable boats, and still the violence continued. In early 1990, a Canadian mechanized battalion moved to Cornwall in preparation for an aid to the civil power mission which was subsequently canceled.²⁹

The Warriors did not enjoy the easy support of all Mohawks and their tactics and approach divided the community. “The anger on the reserve between those opposed to gambling, drug-running and smuggling, and those who feel the natives should be a law unto themselves, will not easily be overcome,” Captain Tony Keene noted in early 1990.³⁰ The Warriors were fiercely opposed by other traditional Mohawks who followed the teachings of the Seneca prophet Handsome Lake. The Warriors dismissed this competing philosophy because of its Quaker influences, but also because it directly contradicted their direct-action approach. Journalist Loreen Pindera explained that the

²⁷ Rick Hornung, *One Nation Under the Gun* (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing, 1991). Opponents of gambling saw it as a corruption of Native culture, while supporters saw it as a tool for economic development. For the CF's role in these developments, see Capt Tony Keene, “Guns among the Mohawks,” *Sentinel* 24/4 (1988), pp. 2-4.

²⁸ John Borrows, “Crown and Aboriginal Occupations of Land: A History & Comparison,” a background paper prepared for the Ipperwash Inquiry (October 2005), 71. Available online at http://www.ipperwashinquiry.ca/policy_part/policing/pdf/History_of_Occupations_Borrows.pdf (last accessed 15 Jun 06).

²⁹ Sean M. Maloney, “Domestic Operations: The Canadian Approach,” *Parameters* (autumn 1997), pp. 135-152; Hornung, *One Nation Under the Gun*, pp. 15-20; House of Commons, *Minutes of the Proceedings and Evidence of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, Issue No. 55, March 19, 1991* (Government of Canada: Supply and Services Canada, 1991), 92. For a critical look at the Warriors and Mohawk community relations, see “The Long Fall of the Mohawk Warriors,” *The Mackenzie Institute Papers* 6 (1996), available online at http://www.mackenzieinstitute.com/1996/1996_06_Military_Mohawks.html (last accessed 10 June 2006).

³⁰ Keene, “Guns amongst the Mohawks.”

followers of Handsome Lake “are pacifists who believe the Peacemaker long ago instructed them to bury all their weapons and cease all warfare.”³¹ Accordingly, some commentators questioned the legitimacy of the self-proclaimed defenders of traditional Mohawk society, suggesting that the Warriors represented contemporary militant ideals with no historical precedent. Dissenters faced the Warriors’ wrath. Kahnawake radio host Joe Delaronde, an outspoken critic of the Warriors, recalled getting death threats and finding a skinned cat on his lawn.³²

Political divisions within the Mohawk community further challenged Warrior supremacy. “The warrior society usually has an adversarial or tense relationship with the elected Band Councils,” Alfred explains, “seeing them as an illegitimate form of governance imposed by state authorities that serves to undermine traditional political structures.”³³ The Warriors’ rejected (and continued to reject) the band council structure of governance, seeing it as a creature of the *Indian Act* and thus as an artifact of colonial control, and cast themselves as freedom fighters. Journalist Ann Charney observed just before the Oka Crisis in 1990 that:

These days, militant Mohawks see themselves as engaged in a struggle for survival – the last great Indian war. They are aiming at nothing less than economic, cultural, and territorial sovereignty. While Canada remains transfixed by ... Quebec nationalists, the Kahnawake Indians, invoking the force of ancestral tradition and combining it with contemporary Western know-how, are going about the business of building an independent Mohawk republic, capable of defending itself, in the very shadow of Montreal’s skyscrapers and superhighways.³⁴

³¹ Loreen Pindera, “The Making of a Warrior,” *Saturday Night* 106/3 (April 1991), p. 34.

³² Crisis inspired many people,” *First Nations Drum* (Fall 2000), available online at http://www.firstnationsdrum.com/fall2000/hist_oka.htm (last accessed 20 June 2006).

³³ Alfred and Lowe, “Warrior Societies,” p. 44.

³⁴ Ann Charney, “The Last Indian War: A War of Independence Built on Cut-Rate Cigarettes,” *The Idler* no. 29 (1990), p. 16.

In March 1990, Mohawks from Kanésatake blockaded a road just north of Montreal to stop the expansion of the golf course. The municipality of Oka obtained an injunction affirming that the Mohawk demonstration was illegal, and which provided for their forcible removal by police. The Mohawks ignored the injunction and barred access to the disputed lands. It was originally a “peaceful” action, undertaken in consultation with the Alliance for Non-Violent Action, and the protestors remained unarmed for several weeks. In early May, they received a tip that the Sureté du Québec’s (SQ) was planning a raid and issued a “distress call” to the other Mohawk reserves. Warriors’ Society members from other Mohawk communities arrived on the scene – some residents later said that they were uninvited – with advice and with weapons. For example, Francis Boots (the “War Chief” from Akwesasne) made three trips to Kanésatake in May and June, insisting that “he was there at the invitation of the people in the Pines to advise, not to take over the fight.” The disorganized group at the barricades, who had access to few resources, received truckloads of food, tents, sleeping bags, and other equipment from the Akwesasne Mohawks.³⁵

The SQ’s disastrous dawn raid on 11 July 1990, a day after Kanésatake Band Chief George Martin had met Quebec cabinet ministers and received assurances there would be no attacks, changed the situation in salient ways. Twice the SQ tried to clear the road with a front-end loader but was rebuffed. Then about one hundred police officers in riot gear stormed the barricades, armed with assault rifles and concussion grenades. In the confusion and chaos, shrouded by tear gas, each side claimed the other shot first. When the dust settled a few minutes later, the implications of the

³⁵ Pindera, “The Making of a Warrior,” p. 36.

confrontation were clear: SQ police corporal Marcel Lemay lay dead from a bullet.³⁶ The assault broadened and deepened the crisis, and the SQ's ill-executed offensive on the barricades galvanized the Mohawk community. The Warriors, who had enjoyed limited support at Kanesatake until that time, now enjoyed the status of heroic defenders.

Faced with external aggression, the community tolerated the Warriors' presence. The moderate voices within the Mohawk community were quickly marginalized, while the Warriors consolidated their self-proclaimed right to speak for the Mohawk community by issuing ultimatums and courting media attention. Following the raid, the Kanesatake band council leadership left the community and attempted to continue their consultation with government officials from nearby St. Eustache. Bereft of community support, and beyond the gaze of television cameras, the elected band council was politically marginal for the remainder of the crisis.³⁷ Kahnawake Mohawks showed their support for their Kanesatake confrères by barricading vehicle access to the Mercier Bridge -- a vital link between Montreal and Chateauguay for sixty thousand commuters. Furious mobs vented their anger by burning effigies of Natives and later politicians, launched insults at the SQ, and on 17 July nearly four thousand traversed the protective fencing and advanced on police lines. Ellen Gabriel, the principal Mohawk negotiator, announced that there could be no resolution without federal representations and that more than twenty Mohawk "resource persons" would have to participate at the bargaining table. Furthermore, the Warriors would blow up the Mercier Bridge if the SQ

³⁶ The Mohawk Warriors claimed publicly that the police fired first, and that Lemay had been a victim of fratricide (killed by a police bullet). Five years after the standoff, a coroner's report concluded that the shot was fired by a Mohawk warrior, but the report did not identify the killer and no one was charged with Lemay's murder. Gilbert, Guy. *Rapport d'enquête du coroner Guy Gilbert sur les causes et circonstances du décès de Monsieur Marcel Lemay*. Quebec City: Gouvernement du Québec, Bureau du coroner, 1995.

³⁷ Williamson, "So I Can Hold My Head High," p. 93.

took any direction action against the blockades. The police tried to close off food supplies to Kanesatake and Kahnawake, and two hundred Châteauguay residents tried to prevent reserve residents from buying anything at a local supermarket.³⁸ As the situation spiraled out of control, the provincial government turned to Ottawa.

Sociologist Willem de Lint, in a study of public order policing in Canada, explained that the Oka crisis can be understood using the three dimensions of public order strategizing: ground, communications and coercion.

Firstly, it was precipitated by a dispute *about* ground and the authority (with a land claim pending) of the municipality of Oka to zone a particular area. This was undertaken by an imposition of the will of the municipality against the will of a significant minority through a legal vehicle (an injunction) and court orders to carry out the force of the law. The quick recourse to legal authorization via civil and criminal law restricted police manoeuvrability and created face-saving issues for both sides. Secondly, communications were characterized by inflexibility and a lack of dialogue. This initial gambit was ill-considered given that it further exacerbated the question of authority and also signalled a disinterest in accommodation. Once the decision was taken to impose the order of the municipality on that of the contested terrain, an enforcement orientation structured the nature of communications. The Warrior response escalated in response, and communications were dramatized in a posturing of hardened capacity and will. Moreover, the escalation placed increased pressure on quick resolution given the financial costs of massive police mobilizations. Time, in this orientation, becomes a foe. Thirdly, the coercive toolkit at Oka demonstrated a reliance on overwhelming or comprehensive use of force and various force multipliers, including the authorization of Canadian Armed Forces. This pushed the crisis to even greater political significance and presented visions of martial policing akin to apartheid South Africa, Northern Ireland or other divided societies. The imagery also awakened militancy in Canada's First Nations communities.³⁹

While generally sound, de Lint's characterization is limited. The government's "coercive toolkit" hardly gave the military *carte blanche* akin to martial policing in Northern Ireland or South Africa. Timing was critical, but given the intensive media and political scrutiny

³⁸ Campbell and Pal, "Feather and Gun," 268-80.

³⁹ Willem de Lint, "Public Order Policing in Canada: An Analysis of Operations in Recent High Stakes Events," prepared for the Ipperwash Inquiry (May 2005), pp. 13-14. Available online at http://www.ipperwashinquiry.ca/policy_part/policing/pdf/deLint.pdf (last accessed 15 Jun 06).

of the conflict so too was a carefully measured escalation of pressure and projection of power consistent with perceived Canadian values.

Military Intervention

After the failed assault of 11 July and the death of Lemay, as well as the erection of sympathy barriers on Mercier Bridge, the Province of Quebec officially requested the assistance of the Canadian Forces in an aid to the civil power capacity. The SQ required armoured vehicles and equipment loans at both Oka and Kahnawake, and the Chief of the Defence Staff directed the Commander of Mobile Command to provide support. In mid-July, the first combat units were deployed to the military base at Longue Pointe. So began the first phase of Operation SALON. At this stage, military support was not publicized in hopes that the ongoing negotiations between the Mohawks and provincial government would not be jeopardized. Accordingly, armoured vehicles and soldiers moved discreetly from Valcartier to Montreal, and strict limits were imposed on any visible CF presence or overflights near the Mohawk reserves. Nevertheless, a small battalion headquarters liaised with the SQ and provided on-site technical aid.⁴⁰

Hope for a quick settlement dissipated on the negotiating front as the issue quickly grew beyond municipal golf course expansion. Quebec Native Affairs Minister John Ciaccia, who had been sympathetic to the Native position, broke off talks, accusing the Mohawks of purposely sabotaging a deal to end the stand-off. The federal government refused to negotiate as long as armed Warriors manned the barricades, but the Mohawks would not relinquish their positions until negotiations took place. All attempts to negotiate failed, and on 6 August 1990, the Quebec attorney general

⁴⁰ Eastern Region After Action Report (hereafter "ERAAR"), January 1991, p. 3, sections released under AIA.

forwarded a second request for armed assistance. It was no longer a local crisis – it was now a national one. “Le Gouvernement du Québec, face à une situation qui prenait des allures de guérilla, n’a eu d’autre alternative que de se prévaloir de son droit de faire appel aux Forces armées canadiennes,” BGen J.A. Roy later reflected.⁴¹ LGen Kent R. Foster, the commander of the Mobile Force, concurred. “The Sûreté du Québec was not capable of facing the kind of weaponry in the Warriors’ arsenal,” he explained. “My view was that the army would eventually have to confront the natives. No police force in the country could be expected to deal with the circumstances that faced the Sûreté du Québec on July 11.”⁴²

The second phase of Operation SALON required a military plan to relieve the SQ at Oka and Kahnawake, to deploy CF resources to remove the barricades and Warrior strongpoints, and to restore freedom of movement on all roads and bridges, as well as normal law and order. A full regional headquarters staff was set up and 5e Bde Mobile Command was tasked with the operation. On 13 August, troops were deployed to forward bivouac areas, and on 18 August the first military units took over the SQ perimeters around the Kahnawake and Oka/Kanesatake communities.⁴³

This major internal security operation was officially described as “a brigade sized force in a confrontation with a well-armed dissident group whose potential military capabilities exceeded the capacity of civilian law enforcement agencies.”⁴⁴ The CF deployment into the Oka quagmire was a domestic “Operation Other Than War” to restore “civil order.” On the spectrum of conflict, it represented a low-intensity conflict (a

⁴¹ Roy, “Operation Salon,” p. 16.

⁴² Foster quoted in Major Gerald Baril, “Mission Accomplished,” *Sentinel* 24/4 (1990), p. 4.

⁴³ ERAAR, p. 4.

⁴⁴ ERAAR, p. 1.

limited politico-military struggle to achieve political, social, economic or psychological objectives, confined to a geographic area, and characterized by constraints on the weaponry, tactics and the level of violence). On the continuum of military operations, it constituted a light infantry intensive, low-level operation (an operation conducted by forces-in-being applying the minimum force necessary to achieve the mission).⁴⁵ Operation SALON was a typical IS operation in several respects. First, the military was subject to political direction at all times. Second, Section XI of the *National Defence Act* explains that the *Queen's Regulations and Orders* govern military behaviour in an aid to the civil power role, and explicitly stipulate "the law, that no more force may be used than is necessary, applies at all time; lethal weapons must not be used to prevent or suppress minor disorders or offenses which are not serious, and in no case shall firearms be discharged if less extreme measures will suffice."⁴⁶ In short, the military's role was to help restore law and order with a minimum of force. CF personnel at all levels were legally bound to a policy of "no first use of lethal force."

Political considerations complicated the clear and timely transmission of orders from the onset, and military commanders ended up taking a lead role in planning and conducting operations beyond mere support to police operations.⁴⁷ This situation reflected political confusion and leadership shortcomings at both the federal and provincial levels. Policy scholars Robert Campbell and Les Pal observed:

Indian Affairs minister Tom Siddon was a cipher throughout the affair. The Prime Minister [still reeling from the defeat of the Meech Lake Accord] studiously avoided dealing with the crisis. Premier Bourassa and his cabinet

⁴⁵ B-GG-005-004/AF-000: Joint Doctrine for Canadian Forces; *Dispatches* 5/1: Manoeuvrist Approach to Ops and Mission Command.

⁴⁶ QR&O (1968) ch.23, s.5, article 23.15, note D, quoted in Claude Beaugard, "The Military Intervention in Oka: Strategy, Communication and Press Coverage," trans. Graham Timms, *Canadian Military History* 2/1 (Spring 1993), p. 27.

⁴⁷ ERAAR, p. 5.

addressed the problem in almost purely technical terms: the bridge was closed and the bridge must be opened.... By August it seemed that the entire affair was being run by the military and the Warriors. The terms of debate and the way that the issues were framed had been appropriated by men in arms, not by political leaders.⁴⁸

In this light, it is not surprising that civil-military liaison was plagued by misunderstandings and ambiguity, particularly given that Operation SALON was the first major IS operation conducted in several decades. The Eastern Region After Action Report noted that the “lack of military knowledge in the general population, the absence of recent IS operations, and the tendency for police forces to broaden their capabilities and self-sufficiency, and a decline in military-police liaison and training have resulted in poor mutual understanding between the military and civil authorities.” Without a solid understanding of military capabilities and procedures, politicians and government officials were ill-prepared to provide feasible guidance. “As a result, great care and considerable time and discussion were required to arrive at an appropriate, mutually agreed and fully understood allocation of tasks to military and civilian agencies. The Judge Advocate General noted in his after action report that the CF should “consider ‘educating’ all provincial authorities on our roles, responsibilities and their responsibilities....”⁴⁹

Historian Claude Beaugard distilled the military’s strategy at Oka down to the following principles:

⁴⁸ Campbell and Pal, “Feather and Gun,” p. 329.

⁴⁹ ERAAR, 8. Excerpts from this section of the AAR were removed under ATIP, so the assessment of limited political and government understanding of military practices is speculative but seems grounded in available evidence. See, for example, LGen Foster in Baril, “Mission Accomplished,” *Sentinel* 24/4 (1990), p. 6: “If you want to conduct an offensive kind of operation on the Mercier bridge with the kind of weaponry that would have been required at the height of the crisis, you are talking about an evacuation of about 100,000 people — just to be sure that no one dies accidentally. Even then, there would be a good chance of something going wrong. Those kinds of potential consequences had to be explained....” On the JAG, see DCDS, Annex A: Lessons Learned, 22 Mar 91, DND file 1000-1 (DCDS) (acquired under Access to Information).

1. A dynamic military deployment was necessary to bring an end to such as situation. (In this instance it was a matter of making an impression on the adversary.)
2. The Army can in no way allow the Warriors to take an upper hand. (It must be steadfast, all the while avoiding violence.)
3. Soldiers participating in the operation must be well prepared mentally and physically.
4. The Army must refuse to be the first to use arms. However, if the Warriors decide otherwise, the reply shall be immediate and military in nature.
5. The progression of operations must have a logical sequence, and the Army must maintain the momentum and initiative in the field.
6. A public relations campaign must keep the population informed.

Beauregard concluded that, “without question, the soldiers effectively upheld these principles during the entirety of the operation.” The soldiers’ “gradual but firm” advance wore down the Warriors and forced them to retreat, without necessitating the discharge of weapons.⁵⁰ In all respects, the strategy was appropriate and successful.

CF Strategy during the Crisis

“My aim from the beginning was to resolve the crisis without further loss of life,” LGen Foster explained. “A Quebec policeman had already been killed trying to resolve the problem and it was evident to everybody that no one else should die over this. For my soldiers, this meant intensive discipline, following orders, dealing with uncomfortable situations such as receiving abuse, and so on. It also meant they could not respond in kind.”⁵¹ Given the high political stakes involved (including Aboriginal groups across Canada who erected sympathy blockades of road and rail lines in support of the Mohawks), and the possibility of bloodshed, the military’s strategy had to be measured,

⁵⁰ Beauregard, “Military Intervention,” p. 28.

⁵¹ Foster quoted in Baril, “Mission Accomplished,” *Sentinel*/24/4 (1990), p. 6.

adaptable, and humane. Accordingly, all ranks needed to display skill, discipline, and incredible patience during the operation.

The Chief of the Defence Staff, General John de Chastelain, was in Europe when National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ) received Quebec's request to send troops to Oka. "The CDS was confident that an infantry battalion could quickly overwhelm them," Douglas Bland later recorded, but he knew that the immediate, direct attack that Quebec politicians were demanding "would be unpleasant for everyone." Both sides would sustain casualties, "the CF would subsequently be accused of acting rashly and de Chastelain suspected that politicians would be quick to shift blame for the incident onto him and his officers." The CDS knew that this was "a no-win situation for the CF and had the potential to stain our reputation and our relations with the native people for years into the future." He immediately decided that two fundamental principles would guide military actions: first that the CF would only use minimum force to contain the Mohawks and facilitate a "cooling-out period," and second that the military would not use weapons or attack the Mohawk barricades unless the Warriors took the first shots. He also informed the media – and therefore the Warriors and the Canadian public – that the military was there to relieve the SQ and help maintain "an atmosphere of calm" while negotiators settled the dispute. In short, his approach was the "traditional peacekeeping concept learned in dozens of UN missions around the world."⁵²

Bland astutely observed that the Chief of the Defence Staff's directives to the CF at Oka "also provided a very pragmatic example of how responsibility for national defence is shared between politicians and the CDS" as specified in the *National*

⁵² Douglas Bland, *Chiefs of Defence Government and the Unified Command of the Canadian Armed Forces* (Toronto: Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 1995), pp. 198-99.

Defence Act. De Chastelain decided the military's course of action "and no amount of prodding by politicians to end the crisis earlier than he thought prudent ... changed his plan." Indeed, his concept of operations was vindicated by the success of the operation,⁵³ but during the crisis he faced considerable pressure from the Quebec government to assault the barricades. One Native spokesperson later testified that army officials explained, in an off-the-record discussion, that intense provincial pressure almost brought about the resignation of the senior commander in the field (LGen Foster) and several other "key officers."⁵⁴ The prime minister's conflicted policy was to balance Quebec's calls for decisive action against the Warriors with the rest of Canada's comparative sympathy for the Mohawk cause. These competing political agendas adversely influenced field commanders, whose command decisions were second-guessed by members of the Prime Minister's Office and the Privy Council Office. Indeed, NDHQ insisted on controlling CF operations down to "the most trivial actions in the field," and the deputy minister eventually demanded that Lieutenant-General Foster clear all of his speeches through his Ottawa office before speaking to the press.⁵⁵

The potential battlefield was situated in a highly populated urban area which demanded particular attention and complicated planning. Military commanders were well aware that any outbreak of violence would bring potential collateral damages, and they had to educate the politicians accordingly. Despite strong political pressure to dismantle the barricades and advance on the Mohawks at particular moments of political deadlock, the commanders had to factor into their planning the ramifications of

⁵³ Bland, *Chiefs of Defence*, pp. 199-200.

⁵⁴ Mike Myers testimony in *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs*, 12 March 1991, 53:39

⁵⁵ Bland, *Chiefs of Defence*, pp. 199-200.

employing specific weapons systems or approaches in this environment.⁵⁶ Furthermore, they recognized that the presence of civilians would complicate any military assault on the barricades. The Mohawks regularly called in elderly community members, women, and children to the barricades when they anticipated a CF assault. Reflecting a classic “guerilla” style, there were no clear lines between “military” and “civilians” in the Mohawk ranks – a deliberate tactic employed to offset the CF’s preponderance of military assets.

The Mohawk Warriors had impressive military capabilities that exceeded the capacity of civilian law enforcement agencies. A lawyer for the Kanesatake band council confirmed that many of the militant Warriors spearheading the Oka barricade were Vietnam veterans from the US side of the Akwesasne reserve. Their combat training and experience was reflected in the Mohawk positions: their barricades were well-sited and positioned to maximize cover and concealment, and they laid out an effective network of trenches and military obstacles. For example, Kahnawake was divided into 9-10 sectors with three squad leaders per sector who rotated on eight hour shifts.⁵⁷ Furthermore, the Warriors established a sophisticated communications network between Akwasasne, Kanesatake and Kahnawake, making use of air raid sirens and fire hall bells, to hand-held radios, cellular telephones, local radio stations, and human patrols. They also possessed a large number of automatic weapons, supplemented by an array of hunting rifles, and had ample stockpiles of rations and ammunition. Overall, they were well organized and disciplined, with various calibre combat weapons “de très bonne qualité,” CWO Réginald Gagnon wrote. “Certains

⁵⁶ On the CF weapons, see Gagnon, *Fait d'Armes à Oka*, p. 53.

⁵⁷ Debrief 002 – SIU Informant, 12 Sep 90; SIU/Source Meeting, PM 21 Sep 90, to Coys, released under AIA.

d'entre eux, non seulement portaient un fusil, mais également un revolver et un couteau de combat de type Rambo."⁵⁸

Military officers also had to be aware that the English Canadian and international media were sympathetic to the Mohawks' position.⁵⁹ On July 20, about 150 chiefs from across Canada appealed to the international community and the United Nations to impose sanctions on Canada similar to those imposed on South Africa. The federal government sent an envoy to Geneva to represent its interests before the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Peoples after that body asked Canada to explain its actions and treatment of the Mohawks. Furthermore, on 12 August the federal and provincial governments signed an agreement with the Mohawks allowing the Paris-based International Federation of Human Rights to monitor events.⁶⁰ Finally, the European Parliament passed a resolution expressing its concern about Canadian treatment of aboriginal peoples and sympathized with the Mohawk perspective. The Canadian government, and by extension the Canadian Forces, recognized that the Mohawks' publicity-seeking agenda was designed to embarrass the government and tarnish its reputation as a staunch defender of human rights.⁶¹ The military had to carefully adopt discourse and practices that would not legitimize the Mohawks' claims nor erode public support for CF actions. Indeed, adopting a successful strategy would

⁵⁸ Roy, "Operation Salon," 16; Campbell and Pal, "Feather and Gun," 280; Réginald Gagnon, *Fait d'Armes à Oka* (Ottawa: Arion Enr., 1994), pp. 64 and 66. On communications, see Sgt D.D. Campbell, Senior Night Analyst, 1 Cdn Int Coy, "Mohawk Alert System for Kahnawake in the Event of Military Searches/Movements," n.d., released under AIA.

⁵⁹ There was also sympathy for the Mohawks in Montreal. On 15 July 1990, the *Gazette* released the results of a CROP-La Presse poll of 446 Montreal adults, of whom 53% supported the Mohawk claim to the disputed land, only 18% supported the municipality's claim, and the rest were ambivalent. The poll indicated that 69% supported Native peoples' pressure tactics to back their land claims and 19% did not. Poll cited in Peter Williamson, "So I Can Hold My Head High: History and Representations of the Oka Crisis" (M.A. thesis, Carleton University, 1997).

⁶⁰ This group eventually left because it was frustrated with the tight security that inhibited their work.

⁶¹ On these themes, see C. Radha Jhappan, "Indian Symbolic Politics: The Double Edge Sword of Publicity," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 23/3 (1990), 19-39 and J. Rick Ponting, "Internationalization: Perspectives on an Emerging Direction in Aboriginal Affairs," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 23/3 (1990), pp. 85-109.

“turn the tables” and allow the CF to project itself as the legitimate, moderate actor in the situation.

To project this image, the Canadian Forces had to display superior professionalism, organization and discipline. Most after action reports boasted that the military’s range of skills was critical to operational success. “A sound grasp of sub-unit military tactics was essential, both to assess dissident capabilities and to operate safely and successfully in a delicate situation,” the Eastern Region report noted. “The success of this operation was therefore primarily attributable to the knowledge and skills engendered in a well-disciplined general purpose land force.”⁶²

Operation SALON

Operation SALON was conducted using normal army planning and deployment procedures. It involved a considerable military force, at one point reaching 3,300 officers and men, 20 helicopters, two fighter planes, three high-tech Leopard tanks, and numerous artillery and specialized elements.⁶³ An average of 375 Reservists also served with the Base Defence Company responsible for guarding the five detachments of CFB Montreal.⁶⁴ In mid-August, Aurora reconnaissance aircraft gathered photo intelligence at Oka, while a special unit collected signals intelligence. At the brigade

⁶² ERAAR, p. 1.

⁶³ MacLaine and Baxendale, *This Land is Our Land*, pp. 52-3.

⁶⁴ Despite their vital contributions to the operation, the employment of Reservists also had its limitations. Initially, the Base Defence Company depended upon reserve units from the Quebec Militia Districts, including many students called out for summer training in August. Colonel R.W. Chisolm later noted that these reservists “were not readily available and were not prepared to remain for the duration of the operation, especially when school and universities opened again.” Col. R.W. Chisolm, “Citizen Soldiers,” *Forum: journal of the Conference of Defence Associations Institute* 8.4 (1993), pp. 26-7, quoted in Lieutenant C.P. Ankerson, “Peacekeeping and the Reserves: True or False?,” *Infantry Journal* 27 (Winter 1994). When most of the reservists from Quebec requested leave to return to classes in the fall, military officials turned to Atlantic Militia Area for replacements. They were fortunate that sufficient volunteers stepped forward. For example, the second battalion of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment promptly offered a platoon of forty soldiers, who served on guard duty in rear areas until the end of the crisis. Captain Howard Chafe, “The Oka Crisis,” in *Better than the Best: The Royal Newfoundland Regiment* ed. David Facey-Crowther (St. John’s: The Royal Newfoundland Regiment Advisory Council, 1995), pp. 165-72.

level, a coordination cell (consisting of the army, the SQ, the RCMP, and the local police) reported to the Commander, Mobile Command, who chaired a larger coordination cell including representatives from the Communications Security Establishment and Canadian Security Intelligence Service. The Chief of the Defence Staff participated in federal cabinet meetings, while the Commander, Mobile Command, sat in on provincial cabinet meetings related to the crisis.⁶⁵ No problems were encountered in transporting personnel or materials to the zone of operations, and the soldiers were well briefed on firing restrictions, barricade construction, and appreciations of the particular situations they would encounter when they moved into place on 17 August.⁶⁶

For the regular force personnel who served on the frontlines, their pre-deployment training was critical. Although the soldiers were not involved in combat, LGen Foster explained, the skills that they employed at Oka were a product of “training systems that teach soldiers, junior NCMs, senior NCMs and officers to operate as a combat team in a battle scenario – allowing them to fight as a team, to give and take orders to resolve a situation. It was our ability to fight that allowed us to handle the

⁶⁵ Maloney, “Domestic Operations.”

⁶⁶ Arrière-garde 12e RBC, Opération SALON, Rapport intérimaire post-opération, 5 octobre 1990, released under AIA. Although intelligence matters in the after action reports remain largely classified, open sections reveal significant limitations in the assets available to the CF during Op SALON. One of the key lessons learned was the need for a “single combined civil-military intelligence cell” – a joint intelligence centre with civilian agencies. Although the army was eager to co-locate working organizations, share intelligence, and combine resources, police and other civilian organizations were reluctant to do so. Furthermore, police intelligence focused on different information, which meant that “information of potential military value is often overlooked or not reported.” Although intelligence doctrine and procedures developed for combat operations were applicable in this crisis setting, the military’s requirement to collect its own information meant that the operation demanded a significant amount of the military’s intelligence resources. Furthermore, human intelligence gathered by troops directly engaged in the operation proved to be a vital source, but personnel who frequently observed and met with the Warriors at the barricades failed to understand the value of sharing information gleaned from their personal encounters. ERAAR, 10, 12; DCDS, Annex A: Lessons Learned, 22 Mar 91, DND file 1000-1 (DCDS), released under AIA. The DCDS recommended joint regional-level training between the CF and civilian authorities. Until post-operation analyses are available to the public, a rigorous analysis of intelligence issues cannot be offered.

job.”⁶⁷ Solid battle procedure, training and experience gave the soldiers the physical and mental confidence to deal with the practical problems they encountered, and allowed them to set the tone in their relations with the Mohawks immediately upon their arrival at the blockades. BGen Roy explained:

L'entraînement que les troupes avait reçu avant ce deployment répondait rigoureusement aux critères de ce plan d'interposition sans affrontement mais prenait aussi en consideration les pires scenarios imaginables. La sécurité des troupes était primordiale et seul un entraînement intensif leur donnait la confiance requise pour executer ces tâches delicates sans aucune bavure. Avant de se déployer, nos troupes ont concentré leurs efforts notamment au zérotage des armes individuelles et collectives, à l'apprentissage du désamorçage des explosifs et tranquenards ainsi qu'à la revision des techniques de premiers soins. Collectivement, les bataillons ont pratiqué des scénarios visant à recréer l'approche aux défenses amérindiennes sous plusieurs formes. Ces exercices nous ont permis, une fois l'option d'interposition retenue, de nous disposer militairement sur le terrain avec rapidité et efficacité.⁶⁸

Before actual deployment and at certain junctures when confrontations with the Warriors were scarce, officers and NCOs kept the troops occupied to prevent boredom. Physical conditioning, hand-to-hand combat training, bayonet training, crowd control techniques, equipment checks, and practice with machine guns, grizzly carriers, and medical evacuation methods all kept the soldiers active and mentally engaged.⁶⁹

Major Alain Tremblay, a company commander with 3rd Battalion R22eR, led his troops on their initial advance to contact with the Mohawks. “The soldiers were not aware of the extent of that action,” he explained afterwards. “They operated under the control of their officers and NCOs, and their only concern was to carry out the orders they were given. The NCOs and officers were more aware of the seriousness of the situation. We knew that we were trained to deal with this sort of situation but, until it

⁶⁷ Foster quoted in Baril, “Mission Accomplished,” p. 7.

⁶⁸ Roy, “Opération SALON,” p. 17.

⁶⁹ Gagnon, *Fait d'Armes à Oka*, p. 42.

actually occurred, we didn't know how we would react. It was only after the fact that we realized that our military training prepared us well for it."⁷⁰ The different situations in Kahnawake and Oka (Kanesatake) required adaptability and considerable restraint. LCol Robin Gagnon, CO of 3rd Battalion R22eR, recalled that "when we arrived in the Kahnawake area, tension was running high. At my first meeting, I attempted to defuse the situation. I explained my mission [to the Warriors] and told them that my men would not aim their weapons at them provided that the Warriors did likewise." The ensuing atmosphere of trust and mutual understanding, which reflected Gagnon's "personal commitment, calm and attentive approach to native reality," avoided bloodshed. He regretted, however, that he only learned about Mohawk culture during the crisis. "It would have helped beforehand to be familiar, not only with the underlying reasons for their demands, but also with their culture and traditions. Their outlook is altogether different from ours. Moreover, the chiefs have no decision-making power whatsoever. They must constantly consult their people and reach a consensus."⁷¹

CWO Réginald Gagnon, the Sergeant-Major "C" Company of 2nd Battalion R22eR, later recorded his experiences and painted a portrait of CF professionalism and adaptability that allowed his troops to overcome resistance without resorting to bloodshed. Between 23 and 31 August, he noted, not a day passed without members of his company coming face-to-face with Warriors. It became obvious to the soldiers that "chaque occasion de provoquer un accrochage coïncidait avec la presence des

⁷⁰ Tremblay quoted in Baril, "Mission Accomplished," p. 4.

⁷¹ "Mission Accomplished," *Sentinel* 24/4 (1990), 5. As one informant explained in mid-September that "moderate" residents continued to listen to the band council (which did not support the Warriors), while those involved in the sale of cigarettes and the running of bingos listened to the "Nation Office" (the administrative arm of the Longhouse). Indeed, he reported earlier that the Nation Office, Tribal Council and Warrior Society seemed to have "merged into a single entity" which made decisions on the basis of consensus and then passed them on to the barricades through the tactical command post situated at the Legion Hall. Debrief 002 – SIU Informant, 12 Sep 90; SIU/Source Meeting, PM 21 Sep 90, to Coys, released under AIA.

medias d'informations demeurant sur leur côté des barricades.” Despite the high stress atmosphere, the soldiers of his company displayed discipline and appropriate reactions to provocations from the onset. “À chaque fois, ils gardaient leur calme et leur sang-froid,” Gagnon explained, “meme si la pression était forte et que les menaces à leur égard provoquaient souvent des frissons glacés dans le dos.”⁷² Gagnon concluded that the adaptability of the officers, NCOs and soldiers allowed them to assess the evolving situation, build momentum, and not succumb to the taunts of the Mohawks. In order to be effective the soldiers had to evoke an aura of strength and control. The CF needed to reinforce to the Warriors that it could carry out an armed assault if needed; this consideration was essential to maintaining credibility in the field.

Developments at Kanesatake/Oka required a different approach than Kahnawake. The Warriors chased Chief George Martin (who called the Warriors outsiders and ordered them to “get the hell off” the reserve) and the elected band council out of the community on 2 August, claiming that five hundred Kanestake community members had petitioned them to depose Martin from his leadership position. The dubious veracity of this pretext notwithstanding, the sound of gunfire from within the reserve certainly compounded existing tensions.⁷³ The on-going discussions with the military reflected the decentred and disjointed Mohawk leadership. Indeed, the adage of “only chiefs and no Indians” (meaning every Mohawk claimed decision-making authority) was reflected in the Warriors’ ever-changing demands which rendered negotiations untenable. On a deeper level, this situation reflected the Warriors’ overarching agenda, which could not accommodate any government or military interests

⁷² Gagnon, *Fait d'Armes à Oka*, p. 66.

⁷³ Campbell and Pal, “Feather and Gun,” p. 284.

without an explicit recognition of Mohawk sovereignty. Of course, the government could not concede on a point that could jeopardize the integrity of the entire Canadian state, and Lieutenant-Colonel Pierre Daigle's battalion was called upon to bring pressure to bear in the field. Daigle adamantly denied, however, that the military was provocative towards the Warriors, reassuring reporters that: "There are no sparks. We are not here to attack. We are here to contribute to a swift and peaceful resolution of the crisis."⁷⁴

Company commander Major Alain Tremblay explained that, when he faced the Warriors in the pine woods on 1 September, he "took a calculated risk during that operation. I was not supposed to push our advance so far, but the CO had authorized me to exploit the terrain. We met resistance at the first barricades. I evaluated the situation and, despite the Warrior's threats, I decided to continue the advance. The Warriors seemed surprised and fell back." Major Tremblay urged his men to remain calm when the Warriors, isolated within a limited perimeter, loaded their weapons and aimed at the soldiers. "The soldiers had to have a lot of confidence in their superiors not to fire when a loaded weapon was aimed at them," Tremblay later noted, explaining that the NCOs were instrumental in reassuring the infantry and allowing them to maintain their composure when faced with the taunts of nervous Warriors, including one who screamed at the soldiers to open fire if they dared. At this juncture, Private Patrick Cloutier had his famous encounter with a masked Warrior that was captured by a photographer and broadcast around the world. Cloutier claimed that anyone in the company would have demonstrated the same poise and self-control. "I told myself to be calm and not let anyone see that I was not completely confident," he later described.

⁷⁴ *Globe and Mail*, 24 August 1990, p. A6.

“Besides, I felt that I was protected by my buddies and I knew that the Warriors would take advantage of the cameras to put on a show.”⁷⁵

The military also had to grapple with rising intolerance amongst the local non-Native population. Chateauguay residents, furious that the barricades continued to cut off their access to Montreal, burned effigies of Indians at the Mercier bridge, hurled stones at fleeing cars filled with Mohawk women and children, and yelled at authorities who they believed should be taking direct action to repulse the Mohawk dissidents. A decade later, an article in the *First Nations Drum* recalled that, “during those torrid nights in the summer of 1990, mobs of enraged vigilantes roamed the outskirts of the reserve, waving baseball bats. They roughed up anyone who looked native, they roughed up white people who tried to drive through their road blocks, they roughed up reporters. And then they turned their ire on the police, who tear-gassed them during several nights of wild rioting.”⁷⁶ The military was expected to act as the sober interlocutor between various hostile factions of society, but not everyone was convinced that it was accomplishing this mission. When members of the International Federation of Human Rights tried to enter Kahnawake in late August to determine whether food and medical supplies were entering the community, non-Native protestors wielding baseball bats attacked their car while nearby soldiers and police did nothing. The observers fled, prompting one to note that: “The only persons who have treated me in a civilized way in this matter here in Canada are the Mohawks. The Army and the police

⁷⁵ Tremblay and Cloutier quoted in Baril, “Mission Accomplished,” p. 7.

⁷⁶ “Crisis inspired many people,” *First Nations Drum*.

do nothing. It's very degrading...degrading to us, and perhaps more degrading to the government who can't give us access."⁷⁷

When political discussions between Mohawk dissidents and government authorities broke off in late August, all practical negotiations devolved to the soldiers on the ground. On 28 August, Generals Foster and Roy announced on national television that the military would “not cease our overall or local operations until Mohawks and the Warriors lay down their weapons and surrender in front of the barricades.” Foster reinforced that military operations “could involve the use of 2,500 combat troops and armoured personnel carriers,” that three Leopard tanks with bulldozer blades were being held in reserve, and that surveillance would increase. “We are now entering a new phase in this crisis,” he explained. “We are going into a military operation.” The next day, local military commanders and Kahnawakeronon successfully negotiated a “gentleman’s agreement” to remove the barricades at Kahnawake, including the Mercier Bridge. Over the next six days, the Mohawks dismantled their outer barricades and the military effectively occupied the outer half of the Kahnawake reserve. The Mohawks retained a defensive barricade guarding the entrances to the heart of the community, but the Mercier Bridge opened for general traffic on 6 September.⁷⁸

Behind the scenes, the military’s public posturing was also coupled with creative deception to provide the Warriors with a peaceful and honourable way out of the situation. As Martin Morris explained, the CF staged an elaborate scenario to offset demands for an invasion from some “hawks” in the Quebec cabinet, which was divided over whether to order a direct assault:

⁷⁷ Judge Finn Lynghjem, quoted in York and Pindera, *People of the Pines*, p. 321.

⁷⁸ Goodleaf, *Entering the War Zone*, pp. 91-3.

Army commanders were under intense pressure by hawkish politicians who wanted an invasion, the Warriors arrested and all weapons seized, but politicians also did not want to accept the inevitable bloodbath they believed would ensue. In order to take this pressure off they apparently devised a fake “airlift” of Warriors and their weapons from Kahnawake during a thunderstorm on the night of 28 August. Reporters saw the lights of aircraft in the night and were informed by the army that 15 flights had been made by “unknown” aircraft. It was the media who claimed the aircraft were Cessnas carrying Warriors (they were actually army helicopters playacting) and the politicians subsequently denounced the army for letting the Warriors escape. The astonished warriors went along with the plan.⁷⁹

The Mohawks at Kahnawake recognized that they had achieved all that was possible in the circumstances, and after eight days of negotiation and cooperation had dismantled their barricades. By early September, the military had restored freedom of movement at Kahnawake. In Réginald Gagnon’s assessment, “le démantèlement des barricades de Châteauguay le 30 août, eut un effet dévastateur sur le moral et la détermination des Warriors de la région de Oka.”⁸⁰

But the situation at Kanésatake remained dangerous. About twenty armed Warriors withdrew into a final barricade around a Drug and Alcohol Treatment Centre (or “T.C.”), and the military established a perimeter securing the surrounding area. The Warriors were told that they were free to leave the area without their weapons (a safe passage was promised to the rear of the centre), but they refused in fear of arrest by the SQ once they were outside of the military cordon. Tensions continued to mount as the Warriors became increasingly concerned and frustrated with military actions, including aggressive nighttime reconnaissance patrols undertaken to gather intelligence on

⁷⁹ Martin J. Morris, “Overcoming the Barricades: The Crisis at Oka as a Case Study in Political Communication,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 30/2 (Summer 1995), p. 83. Morris observed that: “The general acceptance of this account at the time gave credibility to the ‘disappearing act,’ in York and Pindera’s words, of weapons behind the barricades. No weapons were in evidence since the Warriors had responded to a promise by Colonel Gagnon, the commanding officer at Kahnawake, not to detain any Warriors unless they were armed.” See also York and Pindera, *People of the Pines*, p. 333.

⁸⁰ Gagnon, *Fait d’Armes à Oka*, p. 68.

Warrior dispositions, to make noise to intimidate them, and on one occasion to steal a Warrior flag.⁸¹ Other psychological warfare techniques⁸² further destabilized the remaining Warriors, from low-level flights to well-aimed spotlights. In *Entering the War Zone*, Donna Goodleaf explained that the Kanienkehaka behind the barricades recognized the military intimidation tactic: low-level surveillance sweeps by military helicopters, continuous military encroachments on what the Mohawks called “the demilitarized zone,” and references to potential “collateral damage” (which she interpreted as civilian casualties). Live broadcasts of military operations also were perceived as tactics designed to force the Native negotiators to capitulate. The military’s use of aerial, land and marine reconnaissance photographs and diagrams revealed their knowledge of the Mohawk defensive positions, and their presentation to the press about the military weapons that could be used were designed to intimidate the Warriors. Goodleaf quoted Oneida sub-chief Robert Antone’s comment about deliberations in the Treatment Centre:

We had several discussions in the midst of all the turmoil that was going on. There was constant pressure put on us by the military and psychological war games were played to ensure that we did not have time really to deliberate on these issues. We spent a lot of our time arguing with the military to back off a little bit and to keep the helicopters maybe 30 feet away. It is very hard to hear yourself talking when a helicopter is

⁸¹ See, for example, York and Pindera, *People of the Pines*, 317-18, 340; MacLaine and Baxendale, *This Land is Our Land*, pp. 67 and 70.

⁸² B-GG-005-004/AF-023: *Civil-Military Cooperation in Peace, Emergencies, Crises and War*, p. 705. “Scope of Domestic and International Operations” notes that: “As a matter of policy, PSYOPS conducted by the CF do not target the Canadian population. Notwithstanding, the protection of Canada’s security within a stable global framework as well as threats and risks that transcend national borders (terrorism, illegal immigration, illegal fishing, contraband, illegal drugs...), make it imperative to recognize that in specific domestic operations, there could exist a CF operational requirement for the planning and conduct of PSYOPS. Such domestic operations could include aid of the civil power (OP SALON -1990 Oka crisis), counter terrorist activities or CF assistance in support of provincial or territorial law enforcement agencies. In domestic operations, a primary target audience would be identified with the intent of saving lives and preventing or minimizing injuries and damage to property. Any authorized PSYOPS would be IAW strict CDS directives and conducted under the principle of transparency. As an example, in the early stages of the Oka crisis, the CDS sent a ‘Master message,’ approved by the Government: ‘The CF will not be the first to open fire.’ This message had very positive psychological effects on all stakeholders to defuse and resolve the crisis peacefully.”

hovering over your head.... Those were the kind of things that were going on inside when we were attempting to look for a solution.⁸³

Carefully coordinated, measured advances on Mohawk positions and psychological operations pushed the Warriors back on their heels and “unhinge[d] the occupants psychologically.”⁸⁴ With momentum clearly working against them, the Warriors subjected the soldiers to a constant barrage of racial insults, particularly towards French Canadians.⁸⁵ CF personnel maintained their composure. Troops took video recordings at key moments, which helped to “calm the situation, and had a certain restraining effect on dissidents that might have been contemplating violent actions.” Orders were carefully documented and records preserved in acknowledgement that they could be subject to legal proceedings and would have to be defensible in court.⁸⁶

At Kahnawake, the barricades had come down but tensions remained. Soldiers conducted cordon and search operations in hopes that they would ferret out arms dumps in the community. As a result, troops of the 2nd Battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment, faced angry Mohawks in the Kahnawake sector on 18 September. Mohawk residents assaulted CF and SQ personnel who were searching for weapons on Tékakwita Island, resulting in injuries to about forty members of the RCR who were not equipped for riot control but managed to repel the mob with tear-gas grenades. LCol Greg Mitchell, the commanding officer of 2 RCR, reflected that his unit was “shocked and surprised at what happened.” They had already conducted five previous searches without any significant confrontation, advised Kahnawake officials in advance of the search, and

⁸³ Goodleaf, *Entering the War Zone*, pp. 70-1.

⁸⁴ Maloney, “Domestic Operations.”

⁸⁵ This verbal abuse was captured by journalists (see, for example, Morris, “Overcoming the Barricades,” p. 81), and certainly did not generate Mohawk support amongst francophone Quebecois.

⁸⁶ ERAAR, p. 13.

estimated that they would need about thirty men to block access to the bridge to the island. In the end, they needed 140 men to complete the six and a half hour operation. He was appalled by the physical abuse of his soldiers, who thought that they were not allowed to hit back because of the principle of the minimal use of force that guided CF operations. "What they should have been doing was hitting back to avoid being hit again," Mitchell explained.⁸⁷ Major (now Colonel) Bernd Horn explained in the *Infantry Journal* that the military has to be better prepared for crowd control when it is called in to support the police:

Internal Security (IS) operations, and particularly crowd control, inherently create apprehension in the military mind. They place the military in a position where it must impose order and public safety while faced by a potentially hostile civilian crowd. Although during the conduct of their demonstration the protesters commit various criminal acts, they are often seen as unarmed demonstrators who are merely expressing their discontent in a public forum. The military is then placed in an awkward situation. It must maintain Law and Order, in accordance with the mandate it would have received from its political masters, yet the military cannot be seen as exhibiting undue aggression or force in carrying out its task.

The Oka Crisis was replete with images of the military with fixed bayonets being pushed and punched, with numerous efforts from the hostile crowd to wrestle rifles from the soldiers' grasp. However, short of the use of force by rifle or bayonet, the military was hard pressed to effectively prevent attacks on its formations or individual soldiers.⁸⁸

The Oka operation demonstrated the need for more unarmed combat training, to enhance the confidence and competence of soldiers who faced situations where a resort to lethal force was not appropriate.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Mitchell quoted in Baril, "Mission Accomplished," pp. 7-8. On previous notification, see Press Statement of LGen Foster, "Army Details New Measures to be Taken to Resolve the Crisis," 20 September 1990, annex E to CDS War Diary period 17-23 Sep 90, released under AIA.

⁸⁸ Major B. Horn, "Crowd Control - Another Solution," *Infantry Journal* 24 (Spring 1993).

⁸⁹ Major P.B. Stogran, "Unarmed Combat: A Way Ahead," *Infantry Journal* 25 (Autumn 1993).

By mid-September, the situation at Kanesatake was entering a new phase. The army erected light towers to better observe the Mohawk side of the razor wire at night, and on the 13th it cut off all external communication lines to the T.C. (except their own "Hot Line" straight to the army negotiations office). Journalists' cell phones were also jammed, and Major George Rousseau strongly urged the remaining reporters to leave the building before nightfall. They chose to stay.⁹⁰ On 17 September, negotiations between the CF and the Mohawks reached an impasse because the outstanding issues were outside of their mandate. The main barricades were down, and the SQ arrived in Oka to patrol the territory, indicating the army would not remain longer than a week. American civil rights activist Jesse Jackson arrived to try and broker a peaceful settlement, but the military did not let him cross their lines. "It was very clear in the army's mind that the Standoff would end," the Kanesatake community website recalls, "With or Without the Warriors consent." Although media depictions cast the army as more belligerent and uncompromising by this point, York and Pindera suggest that the CF created a hidden "back door" in hopes that the Warriors would simply "disappear" as they had done at Kahnawake. Although razor wire barriers suggested that the settlement was tightly encircled, the army told the remaining Warriors that it had left a safe corridor through the woods and mountains north of the community and encouraged them to use it.⁹¹ They remained barricaded in the detoxification centre rather than surrender, debated how to end the crisis, and put together a final offer for

⁹⁰ "The army closes in," Kanesatake.com: Our Heritage, Summer of 1990, available online at: <http://www.kanesatake.com/heritage/crisis/crisis2.html> (last accessed 5 June 2006). "The last resisting Mohawks had no independent way of communicating with the outside world," Martin Morris noted, "yet even then, they could still receive media communications via television and conventional radio." "Overcoming the Barricades," p. 84. In fact, the Warriors managed to find a place where cellular phones were not affected by the blackout and called it the "Phone booth," thus managing to contact outside advisers prior to surrendering.

⁹¹ York and Pindera, *People of the Pines*, pp. 341-2.

the provincial government to negotiate a settlement. Premier Bourassa rejected it on 25 September, and most of the Warriors holed up in the T.C. acknowledged the futility of continuing the standoff any longer.⁹²

The following day, the remaining Warriors decided to surrender⁹³ in a confused exit from the treatment centre. Although some commentators later blamed the military, the chaos was carefully orchestrated by the Warriors to allow some of the main protagonists to escape. It also caught the military off guard. "We could have made all sorts of contingency plans," LCol Daigle explained, "but we were busy negotiating the details of the Warriors' surrender." The military had stationed buses near an exit so that "everything would be handled with respect to human rights," but the remaining Warriors and their supporters "chose to surprise us by coming out where the reporters were waiting, with women and children preceding them so their companions most wanted by the police could escape."⁹⁴ Journalist Jack Todd described the scenes broadcast across the country: "A Canadian soldier pushing a Mohawk child to the pavement and then kicking her mother down on top of her... crying children being dragged back and forth after their screaming mothers... It ends in chaos and confusion, with soldiers and Warriors and journalists and children running back and forth in the semi-darkness, and army helicopters overhead illuminating the nightmarish scene with their powerful

⁹² After 23 September, the Kanesatake website notes, "all the mohawks could do was wait. The only way of communicating was through the "hot Line" set up by the army for negotiation purposes. The army had blacked out all cellular communications and all ground lines coming out of TC. The warriors submitted one more offer on September 25th. It called for them to lay down their weapons, come out of the TC, they would surrender themselves to the Army, and no more demands for amnesty would be asked. In return, Québec would agree to appoint a special prosecutor -accepted on both sides- to decide what charges could be laid on the Native people involved in the standoff. Prime Minister Robert Bourassa rejected the offer immediately. This offer was to be their final one. They were tired of being prisoners of the TC, and could not face the army's harassment anymore." "The final days," Kanesatake.com: Our Heritage, Summer of 1990, available online at: <http://www.kanesatake.com/heritage/crisis/final.html> (last accessed 5 June 2006).

⁹³ They referred to their abandonment of an armed confrontation as a "unilateral cessation of hostilities" and not a surrender, but the reality was unambiguous to military officials. *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Daigle quoted in Baril, "Mission Accomplished," p. 8.

searchlights.” Minor skirmishes broke out between the soldiers and the individuals fleeing the Treatment Centre. “What have we allowed to happen here?” Todd asked. “Is this a country where women and children can be shoved and kicked by armed troops?”⁹⁵ Given the discipline and reserve displayed by the soldiers throughout the preceding weeks, it was an unfortunate end to a tumultuous situation.

Thankfully, the crisis was over. Twenty-six men, sixteen women, six children, and ten journalists were transported to the Farnham military custody area at the Mohawks’ request, where they remained until 5 October when they were turned over to civilian authorities. The SQ resumed patrolling at Kahnawake by the middle of the month, and the military’s phased withdrawal was complete by 31 October 1990.⁹⁶ The total cost of Operation SALON approximated \$85 million including salaries and operating costs, which was borne by the federal government in accordance with Part 7 of the *Emergencies Act* of 1988.⁹⁷

Relations with the Press

Let's face it, in strict military sense, this standoff could be ended in less than two minutes, but the real battle is being fought on TV news and in the living rooms of Canada. The army is winning because they have mounted a brilliant public relations campaign.

*Christopher Cushing, 22 September 1990.*⁹⁸

Army legitimacy and public support during the Oka Crisis depended largely upon “media spin.” Various scholarly studies have assessed the media coverage of the Oka

⁹⁵ Jack Todd, “A Last Nightmare: Army Allowed Surrender to Denigrate into Chaos,” *Montreal Gazette*, 27 September 1990.

⁹⁶ ERAAR, p. 4.

⁹⁷ LCol D.C. Dunlop, “Cost Estimates for Operation SALON,” 8 November 1990, annex B to CDS War Diary period 5-11 Nov 90, released under AIA. This report notes that 80% of the cost would have been incurred on regular military exercises or other planned activities even if the operation had not taken place. See also the editorial “The High Cost of Oka,” *Edmonton Journal*, 6 May 1991.

⁹⁸ Quoted in Andre Picard, “Army - Mohawk Strife a Public Relations War,” *Globe and Mail*, 22 September 1990.

Crisis, typically concluding that the Canadian newspaper and television industry was biased against the Mohawks (and by extension, Aboriginal peoples more generally) during the crisis. While hegemonic and discourse theories may help to understand the media's framing of the crisis and its main protagonists, the scholarly fixation on demonstrating anti-Native racism – that most academics find permeating all levels of Canadian society - has tended to downplay the *effectiveness* of the CF's communication strategy.⁹⁹ Although armed forces are traditionally suspicious of journalists (believing, in the words of General de Chastelain, that they “will seek to overdramatize the events they cover” or will jeopardize military security and surprise¹⁰⁰), military leadership at Oka understood the role of the media and dealt with it effectively. The military's successful application of a consistent, coherent and “peaceful” message during the crisis contrasted with the SQ's more hostile message. Furthermore, the Mohawks' multi-centric and dispersed voice, with attendant problems of incoherence and inconsistency, contrasted with the military's aura of discipline, confidence and strength which was amplified through its press relations.¹⁰¹

Claude Beaugard's exceptional short study of the Army's communication strategy at Oka reveals how and why Canadians' perceptions of the military “changed completely in the whirlwind of events at Oka.” The military's proactive engagement of the media to inform the public of developments and win credibility also served to

⁹⁹ See, for example, Morris, “Overcoming the Barricades”; Warren H. Skea, “The Canadian Newspaper Industry's Portrayal of the Oka Crisis,” *Native Studies Review* 9/1 (1993-94), pp. 15-31; Williamson, “So I Can Hold My Head High”; Marc Grenier, “Native Indians in the English-Canadian Press: The Case of the ‘Oka Crisis,’” *Media, Culture and Society* 16 (1994), 313-36; and Roger Larose, “La crise d'Oka à la télévision: l'éloge du barbare” (Ph.D. diss., Université Concordia, 2000).

¹⁰⁰ John de Chastelain, “A Personal Perspective on Command” in *Warrior Chiefs: Perspectives on Senior Canadian Military Leaders* ed. Bernd Horn and Stephen Harris (Toronto: Dundurn, 2001), pp. 355-6.

¹⁰¹ Beaugard, “Military Intervention,” p. 33; Morris, “Overcoming the Barricades.”

influence the operational situation.¹⁰² Its effectiveness was tied directly to the military's leadership. The operational commander, BGen Roy, controlled the flow of information to the press and thus to the Canadian public. Rather than viewing journalists as an enemy, he recognized that they served as a critical conduit to Canadians to communicate the military's message with minimal ambiguity and distortion:

Strategically, certain aspects of the intervention went beyond the responsibility of tactical commanders and influenced the conflict in its entirety. The approach taken by the media, for example, when effectively developed, increased the operational benefits expected in the strategic plan. The presence of reporters served not only to inform the people but also to influence them to a certain point. In fact, announcing all troop and equipment movements via the press contributed to a reduction of tensions in the field and even went as far as to spark dialogue. Also, the omnipresence of cameras encouraged opposing groups to remain calm and not commit themselves to an escalation of violence. When first looking for the support of the people, the Warriors did not know how to effectively exploit the support given them by Canadians at the beginning of hostilities. Their violent and unjustified actions, once broadcast, had the effect of turning opinion against the Mohawks.¹⁰³

By stressing transparency and openness (insofar as this did not compromise the security of operations or personnel), and reiterating the principle of minimum force (for example, the CDS announced during a televised press conference on 17 August that the public would be kept informed of all the army's moves against the barricades), the CF was able to convince Canadians that it had no hidden agendas and was committed to a peaceful resolution.

¹⁰² Beauregard provides a detailed overview of the development of the communication strategy at Mobile Force headquarters in St. Hubert in "Military Intervention," pp. 31-3.

¹⁰³ Roy, "Opération Salon," *Revue canadienne de défense* 20/5 (Spring 1991), p. 18.

The CF's proactive media program began immediately upon deployment.¹⁰⁴ Federal and provincial authorities announced each major military initiative to journalists, and the military elaborated upon its actions and plans at press conferences, in follow-up press releases, and on-site media briefings by Public Affairs officers. Whenever events transpired that might have raised public or media controversy, the CF took prompt, coordinated action to convey the facts to the press.¹⁰⁵ "During the Oka crisis," a post-operation communications report noted, "not until the military was on site with ... regular daily briefings for media did key messages begin to get out and misinformation corrected." Although much of the misinformation about military activities would not have warranted ministerial comment, it was still essential "to public understanding of the crisis (ie: food access, Warrior criminality, role of AFN)."¹⁰⁶ Journalists who attend military news conferences received background papers, news releases, photos, and video tapes intended for publication. This strategy allowed the military to counter the Mohawks' spin on developments in a systematic and coherent manner.

From the onset, the Warriors employed symbolism to heighten their media profile. Their camouflage fatigues and concealed faces, for example, played upon images of the Palestinian Intifada which had enjoyed favourable media attention earlier in the year. "Identification with the Palestinian cause was an identification with a well known national-determination movement," Martin Morris noted in an insightful article on the crisis as a form of political communication. "The garb identified them as outside the

¹⁰⁴ This "proved to be a key factor. Spokespersons were designated, media lines were prepared, media scrums were organized and a spokesperson was available to respond to media queries, regardless of whether the news was good or bad. The military side was reported and the respect for, and confidence in the military continued because of this." Op SALON, POR Comment, *Dispatches* (September 1990), cited in Chapter 7: Civil-Military Cooperation Interrelationship with Psyops and PA, B-GG-005-004/AF-023: *Civil-Military Cooperation in Peace, Emergencies, Crises and War*.

¹⁰⁵ Major S.J. Kelly, "Public Affairs: The Eleventh Principle of War" (Toronto: Canadian Forces Command and Staff College, Ex New Horizons paper, 1994).

¹⁰⁶ Secret, Communications Lessons from Oka," n.d., annex A to to CDS War Diary period 5-11 Nov 90, acquired under AIA.

official and legitimate political sphere: they viewed themselves as freedom fighters for their nation, while from the government's perspective they appeared as 'terrorists.'"¹⁰⁷ Citing a July 1990 poll, *Montreal Gazette* editor Norman Webster was perplexed at how "Canadians have reacted in a remarkably positive manner to the Mohawk cause" and to their land claim.¹⁰⁸ When the military became directly engaged, senior officials recognized that it had to take a proactive role or it would face public criticism for perpetuating centuries of injustice towards the Mohawks.

Morris explained that "the central communicative action of the crisis consisted of power and influence communications, since the breakdown of authority necessarily brought these types into play."¹⁰⁹ The threat of violence, on both sides, precipitated a battle for legitimacy over who had the right to wield force for self-defence. The Mohawk Warriors enjoyed early legitimacy in media portrayals, but the military managed to at least partially reverse the symbolic representation of who was "carrying the burden of peace." Alfred has summarized the competing images of the Warrior as follows:

Since the warrior society first pierced Canadian consciousness in the 1970s, the indigenous warrior has been characterized as both the Noble Savage—"a heroic champion of native rights ready to die for the cause"—and the bloodthirsty renegade—a "testosterone-driven gun junkie out to die in a blaze of glory." Falling back on hackneyed stereotypes and one-dimensional portrayals of indigenous existence, the Canadian media, governments and citizenry invariably cast indigenous warriors, whether heroes or tyrants, as misguided and irrational malcontents who have taken Canadian law into their own hands. Today's Noble Savage is the masked, camouflaged superhero of indigenous nationhood, glorified and romanticized during the Oka standoff. As the imagery changed in 1990, from braided, Red Power rebels to authentic indigenous freedom fighters, armed and ready for battle, the Noble Savage myth grew even stronger in Canadian consciousness. The bloodthirsty renegade, meanwhile, is cast as a terrorist, a thug,

¹⁰⁷ Morris, "Overcoming the Barricades," p. 84.

¹⁰⁸ *Montreal Gazette*, 15 July 1990, 28 July 1990.

¹⁰⁹ Morris, "Overcoming the Barricades," p. 80. See also Williamson, "So I Can Hold My Head High."

a tyrant and a fascist, whose gun-wielding posturing instills fear and engenders condemnation in indigenous communities.¹¹⁰

Whereas the Mohawks justified their actions on the basis of national self-determination and systematic injustice, the military framed its representations around themes of law and order that legitimated state action. It was consistent throughout the crisis in asserting that there could be no exceptions to Canadian law.¹¹¹ This message was matched by strong leadership and measured actions that seemed to legitimate this rationale in practice, and played upon Canadians' imagined virtues of dialogue, harmony and tolerance.¹¹²

Rick Ponting has aptly summarized the competing discourses during the crisis. Indian rhetoric characterized the federal government as "an oppressive, untrustworthy, interfering, aggressive, and uncivilized opponent." Mohawk spokespersons complained that dominant society's legal system oppressed them and that Mohawk sovereignty placed them beyond Canadian law. On the other hand, to draw a sharp delineation between protagonists and to place Indians above the Quebecois, they depicted Native peoples as "sovereign, spiritual and peace-loving people who are at once with nature and with each other, while simultaneously under siege from the state and police." The federal government's rhetoric rationalized its actions as "restrained, committed to the rule of law, generously responsive, and liberal." It portrayed the Mohawks as "atypical,

¹¹⁰ Alfred and Lowe, "Warrior Societies," p. 31. On 25 July 1990, the *Montreal Gazette* quoted Jean Parizeau calling the Warriors "terrorists who should not be tolerated." The following day, it quoted the Kahnawake band chief stating that "Parizeau should recall how the terrorist FLQ sparked the separatist movement he now leads."

¹¹¹ On the law and order theme as hegemonic discourse, see Charles Stuart, "The Mohawk Crisis: A Crisis of Hegemony" (M.A. thesis, University of Ottawa, 1993), pp. 37-40.

¹¹² Amelia Kalant, *National Identity and the Conflict at Oka: Native Belonging and Myths of Postcolonial Nationhood in Canada* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 123.

factionally divided, and violent and criminally deviant.”¹¹³ The competition for legitimacy permeated the entire crisis:

One can observe that for almost every theme projected by the Indians, an opposing theme could be found in the federal government’s discourse. For instance, Indians’ emphasis on peace was countered in government rhetoric by the emphasis on the Warriors’ violence. Indians’ emphasis on government aggressiveness is juxtaposed with government’s emphasis on its restraint and on Mohawks’ “ambush” behaviour. Indians’ characterization of government as dishonourable faces government’s claims to moral rectitude and its characterization of Mohawks as criminal. Indians’ professed solidarity with the Mohawks is implicitly contested by the government’s claim of the atypicality of the Mohawks. Indians’ complaints that the federal government fails to heed the rulings of its own Supreme Court can be contrasted with government’s definition of the events of summer 1990 as revolving around the upholding of the rule of law.... Indians decry government interference, while government decries Indian factionalism. Indians’ demands for sovereignty meet categorical rejection from government.¹¹⁴

The military could not ignore this symbolic competition. If Canadians seriously questioned the CF’s legitimacy during the crisis, it would erode political support and trust. Indeed, the ensuing battle for the “hearts and minds” of Canadians and the world reflected the dichotomy played out daily in the press.

The CF recognized that the Mohawk strategy was to discredit it and undermine its mission, and it knew that sympathetic journalists who remained behind the blockades had adopted the Warriors’ mindset. “Playing the press had become a daily occupation,” the Kanesatake website later noted about the crisis. “The Mohawks on their side were putting out press releases by the dozens. They also knew how to win the hearts and minds of the world by influencing press coverage.” The Mohawks saw this as a “new era in journalism.... The media was present from day 1 and 10 journalists stayed inside the Treatment center until the very last day. A mutual

¹¹³ J.R. Ponting, “Internationalization: Perspectives on an Emerging Direction in Aboriginal Affairs,” *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 22/3 (1990), pp. 97 and 100.

¹¹⁴ Ponting, “Internationalization of Aboriginal Affairs,” p. 100.

friendship also emerged with the Mohawks, even though weapons were always present, and tensions were often very high.”¹¹⁵ The military had to counter the pro-Mohawk sentiments that these journalists expressed in their behind-the-barricade depictions with images that depicted the CF as humane and sensible actors up against irrational aggressors threatening social order. For example, General de Chastelain offered the following “throw-away line (literally)” to respond to media accusations that the CF was denying food to journalists behind the perimeter: “We have been sending in food daily, based on a ration scale of 60 people, and it is our understanding that only 54 are in there. The other day we sent in four eggs per person (ie 240) which were used by the Warriors to throw at the soldiers across the wire!”¹¹⁶ Although the Communications Lessons document produced after the crisis remains largely classified, a few sections have been released under Access to Information. It observed that the media was “becoming more and more a part of its own stories,” and offered several examples:

- the media presence behind the barricades;
- media ignoring military advice to leave the area;
- reporters holding their own news conferences after exiting from behind the barricades;
- the issue of reporters having access to supplies, etc.¹¹⁷

In short, some journalists eschewed the risks involved in remaining behind the barricades and flanked the military’s controlled media environment, posing new dilemmas for public affairs officials seeking to fix the boundaries of public engagement.

¹¹⁵ Kanesatake.com: Our Heritage, Summer of 1990, available online at:

<http://www.kanesatake.com/heritage/crisis/media.html> (last accessed 5 June 2006). The Mohawks also expelled reporters who were critical of their activities. On 2 August 1990, for example, the *Montreal Gazette* announced that its reporters were “persona non grata behind the barricades” because the newspaper had published negative editorials and had exposed “cracks in the Mohawks’ façade of community unity.”

¹¹⁶ De Chastelain to Paul Tellier et al, “Update on Operation SALON Activity, Thursday 20 Sep 90,” annex E to CDS War Diary period 17-23 Sep 90, released under AIA.

¹¹⁷ Secret, Communications Lessons from Oka,” n.d., annex A to CDS War Diary period 5-11 Nov 90, released under AIA.

Nevertheless, the CF succeeded in setting the discursive agenda. For example, when federal ministers repeated the same message about the need to uphold “the rule of law” over a four day period, both the media and Indian leaders took note “and even began to repeat it themselves in their defence for their positions.”¹¹⁸ While scholars denigrate such examples as hegemonic control over the media, the military should consider it successful media relations. The image of the Warriors “as a beleaguered band of freedom fighters was never really consolidated, partly because the greatly superior fire-power of the army was never used and the steadfast discipline of the soldiers (portrayed in the media most markedly in the face of heated obscenities hurled at them by enraged Warriors) was an essential part of the army's strategy to avoid such an image and to win over public sympathy.” Morris observed that “the struggle - or ‘war of manoeuvre’ - between the Mohawks and the governing forces occurred in the sphere of strategic power communications” and that popular perceptions factored heavily into all attempts by both sides to influence the other. As one newspaper suggested at the time, the confrontation was “more of a media war than a true battle for territory,” a “war of words” and “war of images,” where “play-acting in front of the cameras did seem to present an alternative to shooting.”¹¹⁹

The Army's communication strategy created a public image that, coupled with the military discipline displayed on the ground, engendered sufficient public support to undermine the Warriors' counter-claims for Canadian sympathy. A 26 September 1990 article in *Le Devoir* applauded the military's performance:

In regards to Quebec public opinion, the Army will have been the big discovery of the native crisis. So while the soldiers have begun returning

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Morris, “Overcoming the Barricades,” p. 83.

to their bases, the public can't stop praising these young men whose behaviour deeply impressed all during these days which could have, any one, turned to tragedy: Self control, restraint, discipline, and even a surprising coolness in communication.... All of this, under an unfailing lucky star, almost faultlessly. The Army ends the affair with all honour, the honour of peace.¹²⁰

The Aftermath

The Eastern Region After Action Report concluded that:

Operation SALON was a large, complex, and drawn-out IS operation. It centered around a potentially explosive situation that could have deteriorated into armed violence between the police and military on one side, and the Warriors and their sympathizers on the other. While acknowledging the forbearance and restraint of the native factions and civil authorities, tragedy was averted and Canadian principles of law enforcement upheld in large measure because of the manner in which disciplined and well-trained units were able to conduct a wide range of military operations. The utility of a general purpose, combat capable army at an adequate level of readiness was amply demonstrated on Operation SALON. A less capable force would have failed in its task.¹²¹

This is an appropriate summary of the military's important contribution to the management and eventual diffusion of a volatile domestic situation that could easily have deteriorated into large-scale violence and loss of life. The credit should go to the CF personnel who served with discipline and honour, and their leaders who embodied the army's professionalism and apt situational awareness. "We reflected positively on the way Canada will go into the next decade," LCol Greg Mitchell explained after the crisis had ended. "If we had blown it – if people had been killed or if we had lost control

¹²⁰ Jean Francoeur, "Avec les honneurs de la paix," *Le Devoir*, 9 octobre 1990, p. 14, translated and cited in Bearegard, CMH, 41. Contrast this perspective with See also "The Truth was left to suffer on its own: Covering the Mohawk-government crisis," brief to the Parliamentary Committee on Aboriginal Affairs by the Canadian Association of Journalists, 21 February 1991.

¹²¹ ERAAR, p. 23.

of the situation – we would have spend the next 10 years crisscrossing the country putting out fires. I hope this can now be avoided.¹²²

The military won another battle at Oka: media spin. At the time, popular opinion polls confirmed that two-thirds of Canadians supported the military's presence and held a positive impression of their actions, particularly in Quebec where 78% of the population viewed the military favourably.¹²³ As occurred with the October Crisis of 1970, however, hindsight can distort public memory. In the 1990s, the Somalia Affair tarnished the military's image and eroded public support for the CF more generally.¹²⁴ Furthermore, advocacy literature (sometimes disguised as objective research) and NFB documentaries romanticized the Mohawk Warriors and demonized the Canadian Forces. Reflective of the typical storyline that casts all Native-government relations in a tragic "David versus Goliath" emplotment, these narratives characterized the CF as aggressors to fit their depiction of a coercive Canadian state. But the CF's operational successes at Oka should not be downplayed because of intrinsic problems in the broader structures of Aboriginal-government relations. Strong and effective leadership allowed the CF to defuse a dangerous situation. When the last of the Mohawk Warriors and their supporters gave themselves up in late September 1990, and the standoff ended without further bloodshed, the underlying issues remained unresolved. From the military's standpoint, however, it had ensured that these issues would be negotiated in the political realm and not fought out at the barricades.¹²⁵

¹²² Mitchell, quoted in Baril, "Mission Accomplished," *Sentinel* 24/4 (1990), p. 8.

¹²³ Captain Claude Beaugard, "The Army and Public Affairs from 1990 to 1998," *Army Doctrine and Training Bulletin* 2/1 (February 1999). See also Steve Fleming, *Public Opinion Toward Defence and the Canadian Forces 1978-1994: An Overview of Post-Cold War Trends*, Directorate of Social and Economic Analysis, 14 September 1994.

¹²⁴ Beaugard, "Army and Public Affairs."

¹²⁵ John Borrows summarized that: "In March of 1991, Kanasatake Mohawks and the federal government agreed on an agenda for negotiations. In 1994 a memorandum of understanding over land purchases was signed between the Mohawks and the

Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred observed that:

Many of the people who became involved in the warrior society movements on the east and west coast have cited the 1990 Oka crisis as a turning point in their lives, and the watershed event of this generation's political life. Indeed, in terms of providing inspiration and motivation for the militant assertion of indigenous nationhood, the Mohawk Warrior Society's actions in 1990 around Kanesatake, Kahnawake and Akwesasne stand alone in prominence in people's minds and effect on the later development of movements across the country.... Young indigenous people in communities across the land saw through the Mohawks' action that it was indeed possible to defend oneself and one's community against state violence deployed by governments in support of a corporate agenda and racist local governments. Perhaps even more importantly, young indigenous people recognized the honour in what the Mohawks had done in standing up to what eventually were proven to be unjust and illegal actions on the part of the local non-indigenous government. This psychological effect, an awakening of indigenous consciousness and radicalization of the agenda, as well as the broadening of the spectrum of possible responses to injustice was the crucial impact of the Oka crisis on indigenous political life generally, and on the warrior movement in particular.

After the Mohawk stand in 1990, indigenous resistance came to be virtually defined in terms of the approach, technique, vocabulary and style of the Mohawk Warrior Society's actions during that summer. Illustrative of the Oka crises' impact in personal terms on the later development of the warrior society movement, one member of the West Coast Warrior Society told me in 2002 that he was "born at Oka." By this he meant that in his mind and in the way of thinking common among members of warrior societies, they came into existence as warriors when they were awakened to their true indigenous selves in 1990. It was the Mohawks' action that jarred them from their confusion about being indigenous and crystallized their sense of what needed to be done to create justice in the relationship between indigenous peoples and Canada.¹²⁶

Indeed, Oka serves as the defining moment for the warrior movement in Canada. The Warriors, and the Native groups across the country who supported them, "all succeeded in broadening the issues surrounding the crisis to include fundamental grievances over

federal government. In 1997 the Mohawks established their own police station and the federal government made land purchases in the name of Kanesatake. On December 21, 2000, a new land governance agreement was signed between Kanesatake and the federal government. Unfortunately, there are many aspects of the dispute that remain unresolved, including the status of the burial ground/golf course." More broadly, the Oka crisis prompted the establishment of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, which handed down its massive final report in 1996. "The events at Oka also seemed to bring Aboriginal peoples to the constitutional negotiating table when the Charlottetown Accord was being developed in 1992. The leaders of four national Aboriginal organizations worked with First Ministers to debate and draft a series of amendments to the constitution, including provisions dealing with Aboriginal rights. While the Charlottetown negotiations failed to gain acceptance from the wider Canadian population in a nation wide referendum, in the short term Aboriginal peoples seemed to gain a greater rate of participation in Canadian affairs in the immediate aftermath of Oka." "Crown and Aboriginal Occupations of Land: A History & Comparison," a background paper prepared for the Ipperwash Inquiry (October 2005), 62-63. Available online at http://www.ipperwashinquiry.ca/policy_part/policing/pdf/History_of_Occupations_Borrows.pdf (last accessed 15 Jun 06).

¹²⁶ Alfred and Lowe, "Warrior Societies," pp. 21-22.

land claims and self-determination,” Martin Morris observed. “Whether they thought that these issues and demands really would be dealt with within the context of the crisis negotiations is beside the point. The Oka crisis created a communicative context much broader than the one-on-one negotiations: it enabled Native peoples to speak louder or, rather, to speak as Native peoples and to be *heard*.”¹²⁷

If Aboriginal peoples’ peaceful tactics of disobedience garnered general respect in Canada before Oka, the crisis pushed the envelope beyond most Canadians’ comfort level. Militant Mohawk Warriors mobilized strong ethnic symbols to appeal to society’s sense of justice and fairness, and challenged the credibility of the state, and by extension of the CF. “From the strategic point of view,” sociologist Radha Jhappan observed, “Oka showed that, once the imaginary line of legitimacy was crossed, the government was able to reverse the terms of discourse and itself invoke the symbols of law and order, justice and fairness.”¹²⁸ The government could only achieve this outcome because the military projected the image of professionalism, respectability, and discipline. In turn, it demonstrated that the CF was capable of dealing with low intensity domestic operations in a manner that reflected Canadian values. “There is no glory in conducting an operation like this in your own country,” BGen Roy explained. “The final outcome is, nevertheless, positive. We are now better trained. We all know now what teamwork is and what it means to sacrifice our own ego for the collective good of the military.”¹²⁹ In short, the CF effectively carried the burden of peace at Oka,

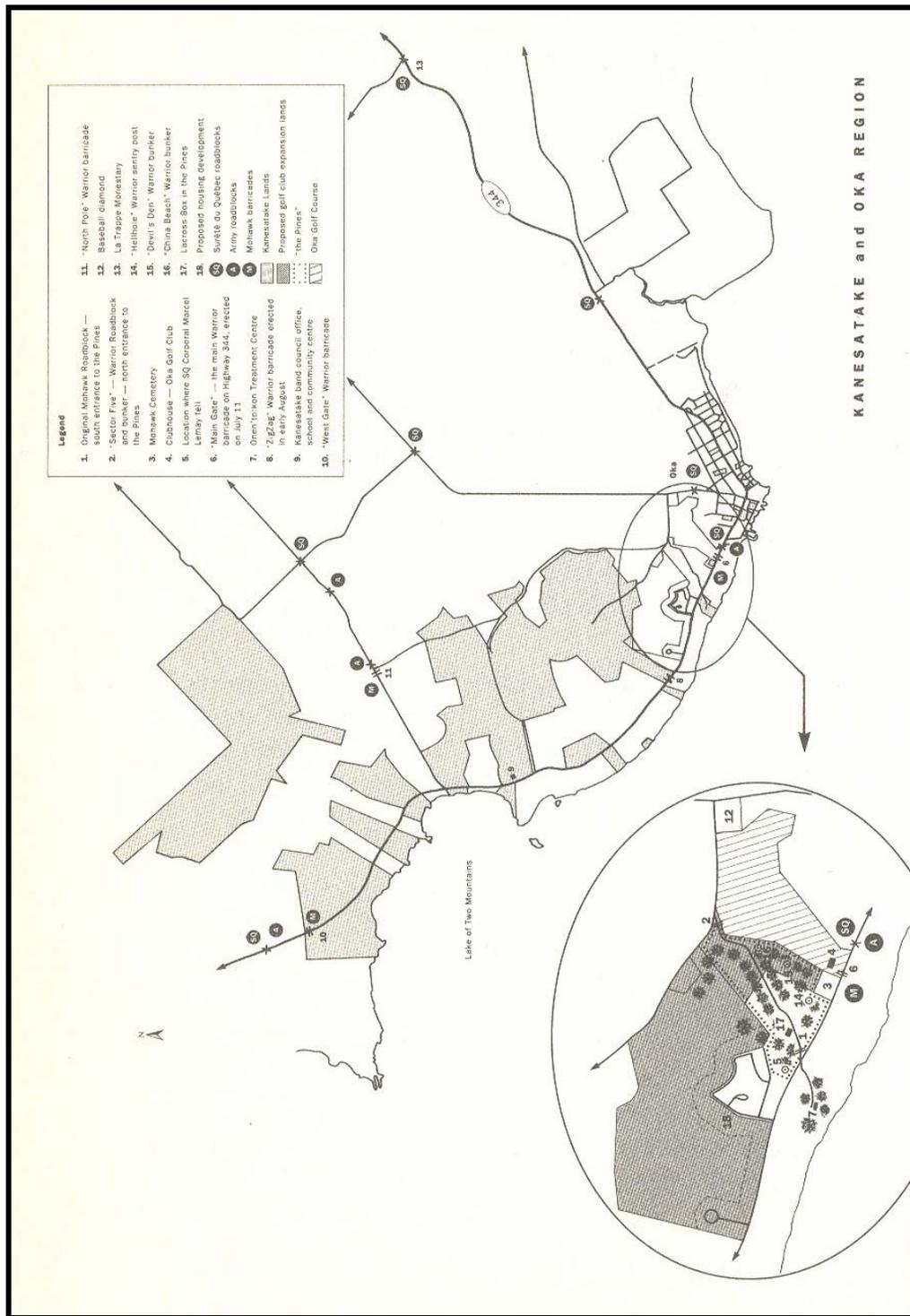
¹²⁷ Morris, “Overcoming the Barricades,” p. 86. Emphasis in original. “I look at Oka as a victory, a victory for native rights,” said Kenneth Deer, editor of the Mohawk newspaper *The Eastern Door*. “In the end, the governments had to listen to us.” He mentioned recent native gains such as the unprecedented powers provided in the Nisga’a treaty or creation of the northern territory of Nunavut. “Look at Nunavut, there wouldn’t be a Nunavut, without Oka. We had to suffer for other people’s gains.” “Crisis inspired many people,” *First Nations Drum*.

¹²⁸ C.R. Jhappan, “Indian Symbolic Politics: The Double-Edged Sword of Publicity,” *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 22/3 (1990), p. 35.

¹²⁹ Roy quoted in Baril, “Mission Accomplished,” *Sentinel* 24/4 (1990), p. 8.

proving to Canadians that it could be as effective a peacekeeper at home as it was abroad.

Appendix A: Reference Map - Oka Crisis



Source: Geoffrey York and Loreen Pindera. *People of the Pines: The Warriors and the Legacy of Oka* (Toronto: MacArthur and Company, 1991).

Appendix B: The Oka Crisis - A Chronology

Based upon "Operation SALON Outline of Events," annex A to DND document FMC 3301-4 (Comd), January 1991 (acquired under ATIP); Campbell and Pal, "Feather and Gun," 334-39; and Charles Stuart, "The Mohawk Crisis: A Crisis of Hegemony – An Analysis of Media Discourse" (Yukon College, 1993), 109-12.

1990

- 11 March Mohawks erect barricade to stop golf course extension after talks between Town of Oka and the Kanasatake Mohawks break down.
- 23 March The mayors of six communities in the area send a letter to the federal Minister of Indian Affairs, Tom Siddon, asking him to intervene in the dispute.
- 3 May Approximately 400 women, children and elderly residents are evacuated from the Akwesasne-St Régis Mohawk reserve (straddling the Ontario-Quebec-New York border) after violence between the Warriors and anti-gambling factions.
- 30 June The Town of Oka receives an injunction against the Mohawks to proceed with the development of the golf course.
- 9 July John Ciaccia, Quebec's Minister of Native Affairs, urges Oka Mayor Jean Ouellette to indefinitely suspend development of golf course so that he can negotiate to bring down the barricades, explaining that "the situation goes beyond strict legality."
- 10 July Oka Mayor Jean Ouellette requests that the Quebec Provincial police enforce a Quebec Superior Court injunction to remove the Mohawk blockade.
- 11 July The Sûreté du Québec (SQ) raid the Mohawk barricades and Corporal Marcel Lemay is killed. That same morning, Kahnawake Mohawks blockade the Mercier Bridge near Montreal in support of Mohawks at Oka, cutting off direct transportation to Montreal for more than 60,000 daily commuters (who face an extra three hour commute each day as a result). Bourassa supports the police action, saying that the events were "intolerable."
- 12 July Operational order sent to Commander FMC to provide equipment (vehicles, drivers, weapons and special equipment) in support of the SQ. The first combat units are deployed to the base at Longue Point. Ciaccia

- negotiates for four hours with the Mohawks at Oka, who demand immunity from prosecution in connection with Lemay's death.
- 13 July Ciaccia meets with Mohawks again and appeals, with principal Mohawk negotiator Ellen Gabriel, for federal involvement.
- 14 July The *Montreal Gazette* first reports a police confrontation with an angry white mob at Kahnawake.
- 15 July Ciaccia emerges from a late night meeting announcing that he has reached an agreement with the Mohawks.
- 17 July Two well-known human rights lawyers (William Kunstler and Stanley Cohen) arrive in Oka at the Warriors' request). That evening, an estimate 4000 South Shore residents storm the police fences at the Mercier Bridge, demanding that police remove the barricades. A *Montreal Gazette* editorial declares that the protagonists of the blockade are "Less like Warriors than thugs: there is no excuse for blocking Mercier Bridge."
- 18 July In his first public statement, Premier Bourassa hints that the Quebec government is prepared for a prolonged process. The first press coverage appears of Canadian Forces troops being put on stand-by.
- 19 July Federal Indian Affairs Minister Siddons calls a press conference to announce that Ottawa will not negotiate "with gun to our head"; the dispute must be resolved by the provincial authorities before federal negotiators will step in. In Quebec, Siddon is accused of being "blind, deaf, dumb" with respect to the crisis.
- 20 July 150 band council chiefs from across Canada gather at Kahnawake to demand federal intervention, and pledge to take the issue to the international community. Grand Chief Joseph Norton likens Canada's treatment of Natives to the white South African government's treatment of blacks. Siddons claims that Ottawa is trying to purchase the disputed lands from the municipal government for eventual transfer to the Kanesatake Mohawks.
- 23 July Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) Minister Harry Swain tells reporters "off the record" that Oka is an "armed insurrection" by the Warriors - an "armed gang" of violent and dangerous "criminals" - who had intimidated Kanesatake leaders; Minister Thomas Siddon contradicts him. Quebec Native Affairs Minister Ciaccia announces his intention to resume negotiations, but the Mohawks reject . Pro-Native rallies urge an end to the "war."
- 25 July The *Globe and Mail* reports that Siddon backs Swain's remarks of "criminal organization" among the Mohawks.

- 26 July The Warriors defend their role in the dispute in *The Globe and Mail*. Ciacci orders the SQ to allow food and medical supplies to go to Kanasatake and Kahnawake.
- 27 July The Quebec Ministry of Public Safety says that ballistics experts have test results showing that Mohawks killed Lemay. Mohawk chiefs decry the paramilitary Warriors, calling them a “gang of criminals” (*Globe and Mail*). Quebec makes a new offer to the Mohawks based upon Ottawa’s purchase (for \$1.4 million) of about half of the disputed golf course land; the municipality of Oka demands \$5 million for the remaining lands (for which it paid \$90,000). Quebec promises this land to the Mohawks, as well as federal cooperation in resolving the larger land claim to 675 km².
- 28 July A Mohawk chief agrees that the Warriors are criminals (*Montreal Gazette*), but the *Globe and Mail* reports that many Canadians support the Mohawks, in a gesture of what they regard as delayed justice. Ottawa announces that it has offered the municipality \$3 million to purchase the remaining parcel of land. Mohawk and provincial representatives negotiate for 31 hours over the offer, but make no comment on the progress.
- 30 July Coverage begins of reporters themselves as actors in the dispute.
- 31 July *The Globe and Mail* publishes a report on the battle for public support, as both sides struggle for legitimacy and discredit their opponents. The media also begins to discuss its role in the crisis. An Oka town meeting refuses to sell the last parcel of golf course land until the Mohawk barriers come down.
- 1-3 August South Shore residents continue protests, and make news by calling for the army.
- 3 August The *Vancouver Sun* publishes a report that 14 wanted Mohawks are believed to be at Oka. *The Globe and Mail* reports that the police are delaying shipments of baby clothes to the Mohawkis.
- 5 August Premier Bourassa gives a 48-hour ultimatum to the Mohawks to reach an agreement or he will call for troops.
- 6 August Negotiations between the Mohawks and federal and provincial government representatives are terminated, and the Province of Quebec forwards a second request for CF assistance to the Chief of the Defence Staff. Commander FMC is directed to develop a military plan and to prepare for deployment of military resources to the areas of Oka and Kahnawake.

- 8 August The federal and provincial governments agree to appoint Chief Justice Alan Gold of the Quebec Superior Court as mediator on the outstanding points preventing Quebec and the Warriors from reaching a negotiated truce.
- 9 August Prime Minister Mulroney announces the deployment of 4,000 troops to replace the Quebec police.
- 11 August Lt-Gen Kent Foster, commander of Mobile Command, says that an armed attack on the barricades is unthinkable.
- 12 August Judge Alan Gold negotiates an agreement, which conceded the three points that Ciaccia had rejected recently: free access to “necessities,” food and medicine; access to legal and spiritual advisers; and observers from the Paris-based International Federation of Human Rights. Siddon and Ciaccia go behind the Mohawk barricades for the ceremony of signing the pre-conditions.
- 13-14 Aug. 3,000 South Shore demonstrators clash with Quebec and Royal Canadian Mounted police at the Châteauguay roadblock. 5 BMC deploys units from CFB Valcartier to assembly areas near Kahnawake and Kanesatake.
- 14 August CDS John de Chastelain announces the mobilization of soldiers and equipment to the Oka and Châteauguay areas. The Mohawks and government negotiators present proposals to end the standoff.
- 16 August Talks between the Quebec government and the Mohawks begin. PQ leader Parizeau says governments were “blackmailed” by Mohawk Warriors. The police union calls for arrest of “terrorist” Mohawks and rioters.
- 18 August The army announces that it will relieve the SQ on the barricades at Oka and the Mercier Bridge. 1,400 soldiers move in to replace the police at the barricades.
- 20 August 5 BMC units deploy to the barricades in Kahnawake and Kanesatake and take up positions. Mohawk negotiators refuse to appear for talks in protest against the army’s intention to move its barricade at Oka 400 metres closer to that of the Warriors, despite a previous agreement to do so. After discussions with the Mohawks, the army leaves the barricade where it was to the satisfaction of the Mohawks.
- 21 August All army positions are occupied. Checkpoints are established with communications and liaison officers between barricades. Negotiations continue with many items on the Mohawk agenda, specifically: the continuation of high stakes bingo without interference; settlement of the Oka land dispute; and a government commitment to settle all outstanding Mohawk land claims within three years.

- 22 August Mohawks demand amnesty and recognition as a sovereign nation in exchange for removal of the barricades. Results of a CF air photo mission reveal that the Mohawks have made “many remarkable improvements” to their positions, including “many more trenches, anti armour ditches,” and route denial obstacles designed to force the infantry to dismount from armoured personnel carriers.
- 23 August Two armoured personnel carriers move to the Mohawk barricade at Oka, crossing what the Warriors deem to be a “demilitarized zone.” The military occupies a vacated Warrior post at Oka and the SQ begin to search boats going to and from Kanasatake and Kahnawake, in response to the Mohawks not implementing their concessions on opening the Mercier Bridge. This results in the first nose-to-nose confrontations between soldiers and Warriors. Mohawk negotiators suspend talks in protest. Following a briefing from the CDS, Prime Minister Mulroney warns that patience is wearing thin and that “appropriate measures” may have to be taken.
- 24 August The Six Nations Confederacy holds a meeting at the Onandaga reserve near Syracuse, New York, where one chief calls the Warriors “fakes” trying to protect their lucrative cigarette and gambling interests. The military is told to keep a low profile and to give negotiations every possible chance to succeed.
- 25 August The Mohawks accuse the military of impeding resupply of food and medical supplies to the community. The CDS directs the military to facilitate the resupply of critical supplies, and to provide direct assistance if necessary. Military spokespersons stress that the CF *never* stops foods or medical supplies from entering the reserves. The *Montreal Gazette* publishes an article entitled, “Warriors Follow in the Path of the FLQ: Admirable Goals Flawed by Methods.” Near midnight, an altercation results in a Mohawk discharging his weapon when military flares were used to investigate Warrior movements and vehicle noises. A separate incident results in a yelling match between a Warrior and a soldier. Tensions mount between the two sides.
- 26 August Commander FMC attends a tactical committee meeting with federal and provincial representatives, which recommends ceasing all negotiations because the Mohawks were demanding too much and kept changing their agenda.
- 27 August Talks again break down, and a Quebec mini Cabinet meeting decides there will be no further negotiations. Premier Bourassa requests the army to move and dismantle the barricades, indicating that he will not be held hostage by a group of hoodlums, many of whom are not even Canadian. Calling the Warriors' demands “bizarre,” Mulroney hints at army action.

- 28 August In the early morning, Warriors are replaced by aged persons, women and children at Oka (Kanesatake) after the announcement that the military will be called upon to take down the barricades. The CF releases a video to the press explaining the military's and the Warriors' capabilities and weapons. The Mohawks in Kahnawake go on a high state of alert. When about 150 Mohawks try to evacuate the Kahnawake reserve by the Mercier Bridge, they are met by a hostile mob which throws rocks and bottles at their vehicles. At least four light planes are reported to use a road on the Kahnawake reserve as a runway for an hour, raising suspicions that a large number of Warriors escaped with their weapons.¹³⁰
- 29 August The Mohawks' demand for sovereignty is said to have made a settlement impossible (*Globe and Mail*). BGen Roy holds a press conference to announce the military's new mission to clear the barricades, and that access roads and the Mercier Bridge would soon be opened. This results in a breakthrough in talks at Kahnawake. The Mohawks agree to assist the CF in taking down the two barricades blocking the Mercier Bridge on routes 132 and 138. The remaining barricades would be cooperatively removed the next day, and the press would be invited. This arrangement is described as a purely "military agreement," and no complementary agreement is reached at Oka.
- 30 August LCol Gagnon and Jack Leclerc, the representative for the Mohawks, reach an understanding on opening the Mercier Bridge, including limits on CF personnel on the Kahnawake reserve, inspections for booby traps, no SQ on the reserve, confinement of military patrols to main routes, and allowance of supplies to pass through. Talks break down when the Quebec government pulls out, claiming that "moderates" are not present at the negotiating table. The removal of the barricades at Kahnawake is delayed one day as a result. LGen Foster is still reading to remove the barricades using military force as necessary. The Mohawks face ration delivery problems, claiming that the SQ is stopping them from entering the Oka area. The military plan to assist future resupply deliveries.
- 31 August Negotiations break down following the departure of the Six Nations Confederacy from the negotiating table, which resulted from provincial representatives not showing up. The Kahnawake barricades continue to be dismantled in accordance with the agreement between military and Mohawk leaders. Discussions regarding the bridge are ongoing, and there is no move at Kanesatake/Oka pending these final discussions.

¹³⁰ Mike Myers later testified to the Standing Committee that these purported airplanes were an elaborate military ploy designed to mitigate Quebec government pressures for an immediate attack. See *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs*, 12 March 1991, 53:39.

- 1 September The military conducts resupply of food and medical supplies to Kahnawake in conjunction with the Warriors. The military is instructed to have a presence on all open roads. LCol Gagnon's discussions with Chief Norton are unsuccessful, resulting in no agreement on the bridge, but all routes at Kahnawake are clear of barricades except the bridge. At Oka, the army moves in to dismantle the barricades at Kanesatake and takes control of all but one barricade where some 20 armed Warriors remain.
- 2 September The military has a company on Mercier Bridge and have walked its length. 2 RCR / R22eR split the responsibility for the Kahnawake area of operations. At Oka, a perimeter is established to secure the area around the last barricade. The military moves in to take down the last barricade, and the remaining Warriors, supporters, and journalists retreat into the Treatment Centre. Commander 5 BMC and Mohawk lawyer Mark Davis meet to discuss the possible extraction/surrender of the remaining Warriors.
- 3 September Senior military officials discuss a military handover and future policing of the reserves with representatives from solicitor general's office, RCMP, SQ, and Indian Affairs. A small protest and sand bag barricade is established on the south side of the Mercier Bridge in support of the Oka Warriors, but is quickly removed. Nevertheless, it delays the opening of the bridge and 3 R22eR is redeployed to ensure no similar recurrences. The army raids the Longhouse at Kahnawake to search for weapons, and moves closer to the Warrior perimeter at Kanesatake. The cordon around the T.C. at Kanesatake is complete to 500 metres. Patrols at Kahnawake continue, and a combined SQ/military search is undertaken as a result of RCMP intelligence that weapons were being unloaded at the Longhouse including a possible 50 calibre weapon. Search warrants were obtained, with SQ conducting the search and 2 RCR providing the cordon. The Warriors are extremely upset with the military actions. Clashes with Mohawk women at Kanesatake and Kahnawake lead the army to increase its contingent at Kahnawake to 1400.
- 4 September *The Globe and Mail* reports that, however bizarre it seemed to Mulroney, Native self-government is now on the national political agenda. The situation at Oka becomes more stressed. The Warriors manhandle the troops, who do not retaliate. In response, the army increases security around the inner perimeter including double rolls of concertina wire. Warriors are told that they are free to leave the area without their weapons. They do not, in fear that the SQ will arrest them once they leave the military cordon.
- 5 September The Quebec government accuses the Mohawks of mounting a campaign to discredit the police. Native leaders meet with Siddon, who agrees to do what he can to reduce "stress" amongst the Warriors. The

provincial government requests that the military establish a containment centre to house Warriors who give themselves up to custody or who are captured or arrested. This safe custody is in light of the Mohawk fear reprisals, and the CDS orders Commander FMC to action, with plans set for Farnham.

- 6 September “A Solution at the End of a Rifle is Not a Solution At All” (advertisement in the *Globe and Mail*). The Mercier Bridge reopens to civilian traffic. The accidental discharge of a weapon injures a soldier, and Mohawks respond by firing six rounds of heavy caliber bullets. The media is pushed back 300 metres to stop interfering with the soliders.
- 7 September Tempers flare at Kanesatake following a breach in the wire created by the Warriors, and rock throwing by the Mohawks. The CO orders the troops to fix bayonets until the situation is brought under control. The following people remain in the T.C.: 24 Warriors, 5 patients, 9 women, 11 children, 6 negotiators, and 23 journalists.
- 8 September Physical contact between a recce patrol and a Warrior ends in non-life threatening injuries requiring medical attention for the Mohawk, who is taken under military protection. Warrior “Spudwrench” Horne pulled a knife and took a slash at one of the soldiers. Two soldiers received minor injuries. The altercation results in bad press for the military, while the Mohawks use the incident to their full advantage. The *Montreal Gazette* reports that an SQ spokesperson wonders, “Who are we protecting? It's like the world's gone crazy.” The Solicitor General calls the Warriors “armed criminals” and the *Halifax Chronicle Herald* publishes article entitled, “Illegal Means Still Illegal, Even if the Cause is Just.”
- 10 September Commander FMC releases the text of a proposal to the Warriors to turn in their weapons. The release is aimed at informing the Canadian public about the “reasonableness” of the proposal. Justice Minister Kim Campbell denies the possibility of an amnesty for the Warriors. FMC considers the threat of a helicopter insertion.
- 11 September FMC Operation Instruction 07 details the transition plan, indicating that there can be no replacement of the military as long as the Warriors remain, and outlines actions that troops are to take to pressure the Warrior surrender. The Haudenosaunee (Mohawk negotiators) submit a nine-point “peace proposal” to the military. The Quebec government reject the offer outright on the basis that it is inappropriate in legal terms to treat Natives differently than other Canadian or Quebec citizens.
- 12 September 2 RCR, in conjunction with the SQ, conduct a cordon and search in Kahnawake and seize ammunition and weapons.

- 13 September Two incidents involve “blank firing” at soldiers by the Warriors. Air command is tasked to assist with surveillance operations. The army cuts off the phone lines to the Treatment Centre, claiming that journalists’ cell phones are being used by the Warriors. The Quebec government demands an unconditional surrender, which the Mohawks reject.
- 13-16 Sept. The Canadian Forces announce that they are in control of the negotiations and reject all Warrior demands for amnesty and sovereignty.
- 14 September 2 RCR participates in two separate cordon and searches in support of the SQ. One search uncovers illegal weapons and contraband. LCol Daigle announces that journalists will no longer be able to transfer video across the wire, and advocates that those remaining in the T.C. should leave for safety reasons. The Mohawks try three injunctions against the military: two are denied immediately, with the third to be heard on 17 September.
- 15 September George Erasmus states that the Warriors hurt the cause of all natives (*Montreal Gazette*). A demonstration of American Natives never materializes as announced (250 rather than 3000 Natives participate). A warrant is issued for the arrest of the Warrior identified in the “blank firing” incidents.
- 16 September Letters are received from the Mohawks (seeking clarification on the CF’s role) and journalists (seeking an immediate restoration of communications to the journalists still in the T.C.). Commander FMC responds to the Mohawks explaining the military’s position.
- 17 September The military refuses to change its position on the journalists. They will not be allowed to re-enter the barricades if they leave to meet with lawyers. The CF prepares questions and answers in response to this issue. Court injunctions are withdrawn after Mohawk lawyers receive military affidavits. Mohawk representatives ask who the military see as the legitimate Mohawk spokespersons, and what assurances will be given if the Warriors turn in their weapons.
- 18 September CF spokespersons claim that reporters behind the barricades allowed Warriors to censor their articles. The SQ, supported by military troops, raids the Kahnawake reserve looking for weapons. Mohawks battle RCR troops and police on Tekakwitha Island. A group of 200 Natives confront a platoon protecting a bridge when their attempt to pass a vehicle through the military position is stopped. Rock throwing and physical contact ensues; during the riot, a dozen soldiers are injured and four are hospitalized. Two C-7 rifles are stolen by the Mohawks. The platoon commander has his soldiers fire tear gas and several bursts of small arms fire into the air. Dozens of Mohawks are overcome by the gas. The

situation eventually calms down and the RCR withdraws its troops at the conclusion of the search, which uncovers five caches yielding 47 weapons.

- 19 September The military does not conduct any operations in light of the previous day's violence. After a meeting between senior military and provincial officials, the army announces that it will soon be withdrawing and will be replaced by the SQ. If the Mohawks surrender soon, they will go into military rather than SQ custody. The Mohawks claim that the military is preventing negotiations, and release the text of a partial agreement with Ciaccia that involves compromises on both sides.
- 20 September The Commander FMC holds a press conference reaffirming the army's mandate to resolve the current dispute, and details the measures that it intends to take to bring the crisis to an end. Essential elements were: the offer of military custody to the Warriors in the detox centre would remain; food, medicine and children's clothing would continue to be provided to the people in the T.C.; the CF presence would be gradually reduced and replaced by the SQ; and the SQ would continue search operations with CF support.
- 21 September The crisis reaches its 73rd day, exceeding the previous "record" for an armed standoff between Natives and police in the United States (Wounded Knee, 1973). The *Ottawa Citizen* and *Montreal Gazette* seek re-establishment of communications for the journalists inside the T.C. when they attempt to get a reversal of the SQ court order authorizing the cutting of cell phone communications. Joe Norton informs FMC Headquarters that Rev. Jesse Jackson plans to visit Kahnawake and Oka on 27 September.
- 22 September *The Globe and Mail* reports that the army-Mohawk strife is a public relations war. Searches for arms and contraband continue. FMC informs the *Ottawa Citizen* that its reporter is free to leave the T.C. as he sees fit and the military will not lay charges, but that the SQ might choose to do so.
- 23 September The Warriors throw one smoke bomb at the troops during the night. Warriors threaten that "the next one would be a real one." Some journalists express a desire to leave the T.C. location. The following conditions would apply: there would be a search for weapons; they would be brought to company headquarters to call a lawyer if they wished to do so; and they would be interviewed by the SQ, at which point they would either be freed to leave or would be escorted to the Farnham military containment area (MCA).

24 September Hopes for a peaceful settlement increase as the Mohawks indicate their interest in a deal negotiated by Ciaccia and the Iroquois Confederacy over the previous weeks, but the Quebec government rejects the deal. Former US presidential candidate Jesse Jackson visits Oka, but is denied access to the Treatment Centre. Warrior lawyer Stanley Cohen walks out of the treatment center and is arrested by the SQ.

25 September Prime Minister Mulroney announces new federal initiatives to deal with land claims, self-government, and revisions to the *Indian Act*. Ms Obasawin (National Film Board) departs the T.C., is searched by the SQ, and is released. Stanley Cohen is told that he will be arraigned in court, and then requests military custody which is denied. He is arraigned in court and charged with offenses included obstruction of justice and carrying a weapon, but is released on bail. The Commander FMC receives a proposal from the Haudensaunee which is passed on to the Quebec government. The essential elements include: army custody; weapons to be turned over to the Iroquois Confederacy; and the appointment of an impartial crown attorney. The Quebec Justice minister indicates that he is unwilling to appoint any special "third party."

26 September Oka Warriors attempt to cut the barbed wire, provoking an altercation which results in 2 R22eR using a high pressure fire hose. At 18h55, Mohawk Warriors and their supporters at Kanasatake surrender their arms but fan out of the Treatment Centre *en masse*, resulting in confusing and shoving as the soldiers try to apprehend them. 26 men, 16 women, 6 children, and 10 journalists enter buses and are taken to the military base at Farnham. Six Warriors escape the military perimeter and are apprehended by the SQ. Less than two hours later, at Kahnawake, two separate confrontations occur between CF troops and large groups of Mohawks armed with shields, baseball bats, and gas masks. In one particular incident, a military platoon is bombarded with rocks, causing Private Feldman to go to the ground, and which point the crowd moves in and attacks the fallen soldier who sustains a minor skull fracture. Fisticuffs result when his section extracts him. The Mohawks continue to advance and the platoon fix bayonets, eventually fire six M38 fliqhtrite gas grenades into the crowd (richocets of which injure two Natives), fire warning shots into the air, and load and cock their weapons in the face of the advancing crowd. Reserves are brought in and the situation calms down. In response to these activities, the SQ decides to close the Mercier Bridge as a security precaution, but reopens it early the next morning. The *Globe and Mail* publishes an article entitled "Indians Heros, Government Outlaws." Mulroney says that "the rule of law prevails."

27 September Eleven Natives appear in court on initial charges. Warriors who initially refused CF custody remain in SQ custody in St Eustache. Individuals continue to be identified at Farnham.

- 28 September A lawyer from the US consulate visits the Farnham military custody area. Thirteen women appear in court and are released on bail, leaving 22 men and one woman in the MCA, and two male minors held in the custody of the juvenile court. Newspapers report that the Mohawks plead not guilty on the basis that they are “political prisoners.” *The Globe and Mail* reports that the Warriors won the war of the image. The Gazette reports that Natives fear the Warriors tactics eroded support for their cause.
- 29 September 2 R22eR withdraws from Oka to St Benoit. The SQ is in control of all operations in Oka.
- 30 September The transition plan is promulgated to the SQ. 2 R22eR is to deploy to Farnham as part of the transition plan, and an advance party arrives with the main body following the next day. The transition will have only one battalion remaining by 14 October, and a complete return to Valcartier by 31 October.
- 1 October The results from the search at the T.C. include the debris from 54 weapons: 12 shotguns, 4 handguns, 10 rifles, and 28 assault style rifles; and 114 assorted magazines.
- 2 October Warrior Loran Thompson surrenders to the RCMP and is turned over to the SQ. The last female is released from the MCA; 22 men remain. A total of 141 weapons have been turned in to date, 44 Molotov cocktails, a cross bow, 4590 rounds and 196 boxes of ammunition, 58 marijuana plants, and various military equipment.
- 2 October The CDS sends a letter to the Quebec premier outlining the decrease in CF personnel and the transition plan, indicating that the MCA will remain in effect until it is no longer needed and that a battalion will remain on standby until the premier officially cancels his request for assistance.
- 3 October Commander FMC issues a press release regarding the repatriation of 5e Brigade MC, indicating that 2 R22eR will return to Valcartier by 6 October. One battalion from Kahnawake will withdraw and move to Farnham before repatriation to its home base by 14 October. The last battalion will remain on call until the end of October.
- 3-4 October *The Globe and Mail* publishes articles on how the Mohawks used the media to allegedly “win” the publicity battle.
- 4 October The provincial crisis committee meets to discuss SQ plans.

- 5 October 22 males appear in court, and all except one is released (Mr Jacob is turned over to the SQ at his request). MCA Farnham closes down. 5e peleton de police militaire returns to Longue Pointe.
- 6 October 2 R22eR / Q Battery 5 RALC depart Farnham to Valcartier. 5e batallion service du campagne returns 157 vehicles to Valcartier.
- 9 October 3 R22eR replaces 2 RCR in Kahnawake. RCR return to Farnham. 1582 personnel remain support of Op SALON.
- 10 October 2 RCR and Atlantic Militia Area personnel begin their redeployment to the Maritimes, which is completed three days later.
- 13 October Military Police commence patrolling of routes 132, 138 and 207.
- 14 October Joint Headquarters (SQ/RCMP/Military) formed at Delson.
- 15 October SQ/RCMP commence patrols in Kahnawake, leading to only minor incidents with Mohawks attempting to interfere. 3 R22eR withdraw to areas surrounding the reserve at 18h00.
- 16 October A press release is issued on the return of 5 BMC elements, commencing phase III of the operation. Military Police continue to patrol and HQ 5 Brigade pass control to HQ 3 R22eR before returning to Valcartier. 1 Intelligence Company returns to Kingston. 3 R22eR form an immediate reaction force.

Appendix C: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Kanesatake: A Decade of Progress (2000)

Recently, significant progress has been made towards the establishment of stability and social order in the area and toward resolving land-related issues.

- March 1991: Agenda for the Negotiations within the Community of Kanesatake This agenda set out the guidelines for negotiations between the Mohawks of Kanesatake and the Government of Canada for the resolution of grievances over land-related issues.
- December 1994: Memorandum of Understanding over Land Purchases A memorandum of understanding was signed between the Mohawks of Kanesatake and the Government of Canada, specifying that new land purchases by the Government of Canada be made in consultation with the Mohawks of Kanesatake.
- April 1996: Resumption of Formal Negotiations Between Canada and Mohawks of Kanesatake Negotiations have subsequently continued without interruption.
- December 1996: Interim Tripartite Policing Agreement This agreement was reached in 1996 by the Mohawk Council of Kanesatake, the Government of Québec and the Government of Canada. It established the authority for the Police of Kanesatake to maintain peace, order and public security within the Kanesatake territory. The Police force was established in response to recommendations made after the Oka Crisis. They provide Kanesatake with professional policing services adapted to the culture of the community.
- Autumn 1997: Expansion of the Kanesatake Cemetery The Government of Canada acquired approximately 12,335 square meters of land in the area known as "The Pines." It was this burial ground that lay at the heart of the unfortunate events of 1990. The Mohawks of Kanesatake have since used this land to expand their cemetery.
- November 1997: Inauguration of the Kanesatake police station June 1999: Property Management Agreement
A property management agreement was reached in June 1999, leading to the establishment of the Kanesatake Orihwáshon: a Development Corporation, which is

responsible for the management of properties purchased by Canada for the Mohawks.

October
1999: Inauguration of an Elders Home in Kanesatake
Permanent Tripartite Policing Agreement

21 June
2000: Initialing of Land Governance Agreement

21 December
2000: Signing of Land Governance Agreement