

## THE MOHAWK CRISIS

# 'People here are very scared'



Tense faceoff: Canadian Forces sergeant (left) gestures at a masked Mohawk warrior after yesterday's dramatic military operation in Kanesatake.

# The day this teacher wept

I am not a weepy man. I don't cry at funerals, even those that touch me closely. But when the news broke that the Mohawks and the army were working together to dismantle the first barricade in Ste. Catherine, I cried.

This land occupies a special place in my heart. The Mohawk high school — the first all-Indian high school in North America — is only a few metres from the site of that barricade.

I taught there until June 1989, and I knew the men and boys who manned the barricade. Many were pupils of mine. Some were pupils at Howard S. Billings High School in Châteauguay in 1968, the first year the Mohawks attended school there. I was teaching senior English and agriculture.

## Bitter memories

Those first pupils came to Billings apprehensive and with bitter memories of previous attempts to fit into other schools. Even at Billings, as fine and fair a school as I have ever known, their coming scared the hell out of half of the staff.

And it did take quite a while for us all to get acquainted. The Indians sat by themselves in the cafeteria, in the halls, and in the classroom if you let them; some still wouldn't attempt to answer a question even after being at the school for months.

And some were hard to handle, hooky players. But I had grown up with kids who were just as difficult, and when a teacher was too lazy or had really nothing to give, I used to play hooky myself.

So we got along. In agriculture, the Mohawks got to be the better students, which isn't surprising, because 60 per cent of the plants that feed us today were given to the world by the American Indian — corn, beans, squash, tomatoes, potatoes, pumpkins, peanuts. And I took advantage of the enthusiasm my Indian pupils had for such items as bulls, boars and big potatoes by changing the course a little.

I won't forget the morning I brought a trio of dead muskrats to class and taught them how to skin them. "High time to quit being city-slicker Indians!" I told them as they rolled up their sleeves, and the white girls began to cringe. Oh, that was a beautiful day!

I bade goodbye to Billings in 1970 and took my alleged expertise in English and agriculture to Montreal's Dawson College. Being tossed out of Dawson in 1977 when I was 66 — the law says you must retire at 65, but it took a year for

## H. Gordon Green COUNTRY LIFE



the computer to catch me out — wasn't going to threaten my family with starvation, but for me teaching was always fun.

In September of that year came the dictum from Camille Laurin — then minister of cultural development — that if the Mohawks wanted their progeny to continue enrolling at Billings, they would have to request special permission, because Billings was an English-language institution.

The Mohawks were flabbergasted. "We're put in the same class now as foreigners who've just come from Europe or China!" they said. "To hell with him!"

But when their school buses pulled up at Billings on opening day, they were met at the door by the principal. He told them he was sorry, but the law was the law, and unless they had those special permission slips, he couldn't let them enrol.

They walked the six kilometres back to Kahnawake that day, made a protest parade of it, and when I watched the parade on TV that night, Ken Deer, who acted as liaison between Indian students and the school, announced that Kahnawake was making plans to set up its own high school.

I phoned Ken that night. "You'll need help," I said. "Volunteering?" he asked. "Be at the Knights of Columbus hall here at 9 tomorrow."

## No building

I sat with Joe Deom — now a negotiator for the Mohawks — that morning. "Welcome aboard," he said. "But don't think we're not in for a real battle to get this thing started!"

So the school began with nothing but a name — the Kahnawake Survival School. It had no building, no books, no teachers, no money and no co-operation whatsoever from either Ottawa or Quebec City. But space was suddenly made available to us all over the reserve. I found myself holding classes in one end of the Knights of Columbus hall, in the legion, the Alcoholics Anonymous Club, in a vacant house trailer, in the back of a garage.

One of those early classrooms was a deserted house so far back in the woods that my car didn't want to navigate the ruts in the road that led to it. The students

split the wood and built the fire that warmed us with its smoke every morning, and they made their own lunch.

I got my first textbooks by sneaking into the room where the Billings school stored discarded books and walking out with an armful of my choice.

There were no salaries of any kind in those first days, nor any promise of salaries to come, but our school never lacked teachers. And when the first money began to trickle through to us three or four months later, there was little more than enough to pay for our gas and meals.

But we were on the move! No longer was there any doubt that the Kahnawake Survival School would survive. And when, in the fall of 1980, we began the move to the beautiful campus that was so dangerously near to becoming a battlefield last Wednesday, there could have been no prouder community in all of America.

## Acreage shrunk

When I said my last goodbye to the school in June of last year, I had been with it for 11 years, the only non-native teacher who had survived from Day 1. But I wonder if I didn't learn more from them than they did from me.

I learned, for instance, that the treaty that gave the Mohawks this land consisted of 33,000 acres, this to be theirs and theirs only as long as the grass grew green and the waters ran down to the sea. Today that acreage has shrunk to 12,500, despite the fact that not an inch of the original reserve has ever been relinquished without protest.

If I read the map of that original grant correctly, much of the cities of Delson and Candiac are now on land that the Mohawks have neither sold nor surrendered.

Must they not change now that they will be forever haunted by their memories of the mobs that thirsted for their blood at LaSalle and Châteauguay? The howitzers? The screaming fighter planes? The mass of steel-plated cavalry and the 5,000 soldiers in charge of it all, which Prime Minister Brian Mulroney so graciously lent our premier, hoping to terrify and starve them into submission?

And what must the terror and hunger have done to the youngsters who are at this moment preparing to enrol in KSS, the school I knew so well and loved so much?

I wish I didn't have to think about it.

Will it help if I tell them that never in our history have we Canadians been so utterly ashamed of ourselves? □

# Indians split on army incursion

## *For moderates it's protection; for Warriors 'act of war'*

ALEXANDER NORRIS  
THE GAZETTE

Two Iroquois groups vying for a leadership role in future land-claims talks with the federal and Quebec governments had sharply contrasting reactions to yesterday's army movements behind Warrior barricades in Kanesatake.

The army advance was "an act of war against the Mohawk people," according to Bob Antone, a Warrior Society sympathizer and Oneida Indian who identified himself as a traditionalist chief. He was accompanying Kahnawake Grand Chief Joe Norton at a news conference.

But members of the Kanesatake Negotiating Team — a moderate group that includes the leaders of several political factions from the Mohawk settlement itself — conceded that the army presence may have been necessary to ensure the safety of local Mohawks.

The moderate negotiators stressed at a news conference in the Dorval Hilton hotel that they opposed the army's incursion into their settlement because they believed negotiations were a better way of settling the impasse.

But they said the Warriors did pose a danger to the community.

"The people on the reserve are

not armed and they don't believe in violence, but the Warriors do believe in violence and it only takes one Warrior with a gun to kill people, so the population is really at risk," said Kanesatake negotiator Crawford Gabriel.

Members of the negotiating team said angry Warriors severely beat two Mohawk men early yesterday morning.

Asked why Warriors had turned against their own people, team spokesman Jerry Pelletier replied: "You'll have to ask that question to Joe Deom, or whoever controls the Warriors in Kanesatake."

Deom, who showed up at a press conference held by Warrior Society sympathizers at a nearby hotel, was led away by Dale Dione, a leading pro-Warrior activist from Kahnawake, when a reporter tried to question him about the incident.

"You don't have to answer that guy's questions," Dione told him.

Minnie Garrow, a prominent supporter of the Akwesasne Warrior Society, acknowledged that Warriors had severely beaten Kanesatake Mohawks.

"I can't deny that," she told reporters. "I'm sure an incident went on. But it's not like this is the only incident in the world that ever happened."

Garrow called the beatings a pretext for the army to move behind Warrior lines. She said it should be left up to Mohawks — not outside forces — to resolve internal disputes including the beatings.

Gabriel said his moderate team isn't willing to sit down at the negotiating table if Warrior Society sympathizers — such as Deom and Kahnawake band councillor Billy Two-Rivers — are present.

"We have made it clear to both the federal and provincial negotiators that the Kanesatake Negotiating Team will not sit down with any new members at the negotiating table other than those who were mandated by both communities," said Pelletier, spokesman for the moderate group.

Terry Doxtater, another Oneida who accompanied Norton and also identified himself as a chief with the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy, said his group was willing to negotiate alongside any Mohawk faction.

But Harvey Longboat — a Cayuga chief from Ontario and one of the Confederacy delegates who walked out of the talks early Thursday morning — said neither Antone nor Doxtater had any authority to speak on behalf of the centuries-old Confederacy.

# Tanks beat fax to Mohawk school

MICHAEL ORSINI  
THE GAZETTE

The fax arrived too late.

Before Linda Simon knew it, rows of army personnel carriers and tanks equipped with cannons began rumbling down Highway 344 yesterday.

Minutes later, at about 2:30 p.m., the school where more than 100 Kanesatake Mohawks had taken refuge when the conflict erupted July 11 was completely surrounded by soldiers.

The majority of those staying at the school are women and children.

Brig.-Gen. Armand Roy announced yesterday afternoon that his troops moved in on Mohawk barricades to keep the peace.

The decision came after two soldiers deployed in Oka reported hearing gunshots coming from the besieged Mohawk community.

Simon, the director of the food bank set up at the Kanesatake Federal School, said the whole event

came without a word of warning — the fax announcing the move arrived after the army did.

"Some of them (the soldiers) were hiding behind the cars with their rifles pointed right towards the building," Simon said in a telephone interview yesterday from the school.

"I never was afraid, but why so much (military) hardware? So much might to crush what?"

Although many of the Mohawk women and children staying at the school are frightened, Simon said most still prefer army tanks over Sûreté du Québec guns.

Sûreté officers arrived at the school shortly after the military moved into the community, demanding that everyone at the school line up outside and identify themselves, she said.

A bus waiting to transport the Mohawks sat idle as Mohawks refused to leave or identify themselves, Simon said.

"We told them that we were not going to show ID. We're not com-

batants. We're not armed."

Sûreté spokesman Pierre Rochefort denied police were involved yesterday, saying it was strictly a military operation.

After appeals from Kanesatake residents, the Canadian Red Cross sent three workers to the school at 7 p.m., including a doctor.

Red Cross spokesman Johanne Slakmon said the organization can provide emergency health care, but cannot act as observers in complaints of injustices committed against Mohawks.

Travis Gabriel, 12, has been at the school since the bungled Sûreté raid July 11 that left one officer dead. He said the crisis has taken its toll on a lot of Mohawks. Still, he said: "I'm not scared."

But Linda Nicholas, a Kanesatake resident staying at the shelter, said she's sick of playing guessing games with police, soldiers, and government officials.

"We're numb, we're scared, and we don't know what's happening out there." □

# Army push into Kanesatake started with call for help from Mohawk

ALEXANDER NORRIS  
THE GAZETTE

The chain of events that led the army to cross Warrior lines and enter the besieged native community of Kanestake yesterday appears to have begun Friday, when an irate Oka resident returned to his home behind the barricades to find it ransacked and many of his possessions stolen.

Moderate Mohawks who spoke out against the vandalism were severely beaten by an angry group of Warriors, police and Mohawks said.

And it was those beatings that prompted one frightened Mohawk to call on the armed forces to move into the besieged settlement and restore order.

The Oka resident, veterinarian Réjean Mongeon, had left his home on Monday with his wife and two daughters.

When he returned Friday, he found it vandalized. A microwave oven, video equipment, cameras, a leather jacket and the stereo system were missing. Furniture was overturned and broken. And three masked Warriors wielding machine guns were occupying his house.

Mongeon was furious — so angry that he drove to the Sûreté du Québec checkpoint in Oka and screamed at police for not having done their job.

He later raced up the hill toward the Warrior barricade, saying he wanted to kill Warriors.

Soldiers had little trouble restraining Mongeon. But the angry veterinarian told reporters he and his family would be holding a press conference the next day.

Faced with the bad publicity, moderate Mohawks, who had been performing unarmed patrols with likeminded band members for several weeks to protect homes in the Warrior-controlled zone, spoke out against the Warriors for ransacking the Mongeon's house.

Dan David, a journalist who lives in Kanesatake, said some Mohawks and other people were offended by the reports of the Mongeon house incident and "felt their names were going to be given to the police as being implicated" in the matter.

"They went looking for some of the people who made statements to the media."

Walter David Jr., a member of the Kanesatake Longhouse faction and a pro-Warrior Mohawk, said the violence erupted after resident Ronald Bonspille spoke out strongly against the paramilitary Warrior Society, which has manned barricades at Oka.

Bonspille, Kanesatake's director of emergency services, and former band councillor Francis Jacobs and his son Corey were attacked at about 1 a.m., said Sûreté du Québec police.

The group of Mohawks fired a gunshot at Bonspille but missed. Bonspille escaped the native settlement. His fleet of ambulances was also vandalized by the group.

The armed forces reported they heard gunfire during the night.

Jacobs and his son were beaten with baseball bats and rushed to the Centre Hospitalier de St. Eustache, police said. They were later released.

David Jr. said in a telephone interview last night that the Warrior sympathizers were furious with Bonspille but he could not explain why the Jacobs were attacked.

"What led up to that (violence) was that Ron Bonspille was shouting his mouth off and said he had a list of names he would give to the Sûreté du Québec," David Jr. said.

"They (the Warriors) were already in a depressed state and a pretty bad fight ensued."

The violence was sparked soon after Bonspille blamed the Warriors for breaking into the unoccupied home of the Mongeon family and looting it.

David Jr. speculated that the Jacobs were assaulted because they were standing beside Bonspille.

"They were with Bonspille at the time. It was sad that they had to be beaten severely," he said.

While David Jr. insisted that the group that attacked the three Mohawks were Warrior sympathizers, the Sûreté claimed in a press statement that only Warriors committed the assaults.

The Sûreté yesterday arrested a Kanesatake resident who fled the settlement. A woman at the Kanesatake food bank said Bonspille telephoned her yesterday to say that he was arrested by provincial police.

The woman, who would only identify herself by her Mohawk name Watsennine, said that a group of Warrior sympathizers — not Warriors — attacked Bonspille.

"He's very, very anti-Warrior," she said.

Sûreté spokesman Pierre Rochefort would not confirm that Bonspille was arrested and said the suspect would be arraigned in Quebec Court in St. Jerome on Tuesday morning.

On July 30, Quebec Superior Court turned down an injunction request from Bonspille ordering the Sûreté to remove its barricades in Oka.

A badly bruised Francis Jacobs said yesterday that he and his son were beaten up "because we were doing what we believed in — (defending) the security of people's houses."

"But because four or five guys did that, it doesn't mean that the rest of the Warriors are doing the same thing," he said.

"I've seen a few of them and they're good people. They're trying to do a job they believe is right. It's just a few people who are going to ruin everything for them."

Some Kanesatake Mohawks appear to have disagreed with that generous assessment of the Warriors.

One terrified Mohawk woman from Kanesatake telephoned *The Gazette* before the army began moving in yesterday to say she viewed the beatings as a warning to residents who favored a moderate approach to settling the armed standoff.

"They (the Warriors) have said they are not through yet," said the woman, who refused to give her name for fear of reprisals. "People here are very scared."

And Jerry Pelletier, a moderate member of the Kanesatake negotiating team, said one Kanesatake Mohawk, whom he did not identify, was so horrified by the attack on Jacobs that he called the armed forces and pleaded with them to enter the

territory and restore order.

That plea for help prompted the army to move in across Warrior lines.

They began inching toward Warrior lines at about 1 p.m.

In keeping with past promises to forewarn the Mohawks of any troop movements, the armed forces sent a fax message to the pro-Warrior faction that organized the blockades — but only as rows of armored personnel carriers and tanks equipped with cannons had already begun rumbling down Highway 344.

And at 2 p.m., the armed forces issued a statement announcing the troop movements.

"I am growing increasingly concerned about the potential of violence in the area, given the existing tensions between Mohawk factions and the number and type of weapons they have at their disposal," Brig.-Gen. Armand Roy said in the statement.

"I have therefore decided to adjust the deployment of my troops with the intent of ensuring the safety of the civilians and my soldiers in the area. This is neither an aggressive act nor an offensive action."

By nightfall Warriors were left guarding a half-kilometre stretch of highway, blocked at one end by the original barricade facing the town of Oka, and at the other end by several large pine trees topped across the road.

The army has now surrounded the Mohawks after starting its advance early yesterday afternoon. The army said no arrests were made, though Quebec provincial police officers followed the troops.

INCLUDES FILES FROM GAZETTE REPORTER AARON DERFEL, CANADIAN PRESS, SOUTHAM NEWS

## 300 in Edmonton protest against army move in Oka

CANADIAN PRESS

EDMONTON — A demonstration of about 300 people erupted on downtown Edmonton streets yesterday to protest against the army's move into Kanesatake.

"This was a demonstration out of the emotions of the moment, out of the army moving into Oka," said Lorraine Sinclair, one of the protest organizers.

The group, Citizens against Genocide, had not applied for any demonstration permit, Sinclair said.

The marchers caused little disruption of light traffic in the downtown core, but police warned organizers to apply for a permit in the future.

"They were just letting us know that we didn't have a permit for

this. We said we knew that and the march was spontaneous," said Leo Campos, another organizer.

The group gathered in front of a federal building and marched along downtown streets. Police followed closely but did not interfere.

Campos said the group wants the federal government to have the military withdrawn from Kanesatake, and ensure the passage of food and medical supplies to the Mohawks.

He also called on the government to institute a fair process to give the Mohawks and other aboriginal peoples their own lands and recognize Mohawk jurisdiction.

In Regina, six Indian-rights activists were arrested after the main Canadian Pacific rail lines out of the city were blocked for more than an hour. □

## Deal struck to remove Mercier barricades

### Bridge can open if troops halt advance on Kanesatake Warriors

ANN MCLAUGHLIN  
THE GAZETTE

Kahnawake Mohawks struck a deal with the Canadian Forces yesterday, agreeing to tear down the remaining barricades on the Mercier Bridge if troops stopped advancing on Mohawk Warriors in the Kanesatake pine forest.

"An agreement has been reached with the military, decided by the men of the community, to prevent further bloodshed," said Jack Lecalir, a spokesman for the Kahnawake community.

"The bridge will be opened tonight and there will be no further military action taken against Kahnawake and Kanesatake."

"We've been assured by General Roy through Colonel Gagnon that

the forces in Kanesatake will stay in that position until a peaceful settlement can be found," Leclair added in a joint news conference with army officials held on the LaSalle side of the Mercier bridge.

Several army jeeps, personnel carriers and trucks streamed across the westward lane of the bridge at dusk, confirming the span was clear of debris. Inspection and work crews would move onto the bridge today, said Lieutenant-Colonel Robin Gagnon.

Gagnon could not say when the bridge would open. He said only Quebec transport officials could determine that.

Gagnon said he's convinced no explosives are on the bridge.

Although the army promised not to advance on Kanesatake warriors,

troops are not going to retreat either. Yesterday the two armed camps were in a tense, face-to-face standoff.

Mohawk Nation adviser Loran Thompson, holed up with Longhouse negotiators in a nearby building surrounded by troops, said he had little faith in the deal.

"When will the people of Kahnawake learn that you cannot strike a deal with the army?" an exasperated Thompson said.

"We heard they're suppose to finish us off tomorrow," he added.

The Mohawk Nation office, headquarters for the Warriors and negotiators during the crisis, issued a statement voicing its concerns that once the army moved onto the reserves, the troops would remain and occupy their communities.

But Kahnawake community spokesman Leclair said armed forces personnel had agreed to remain outside the reserve, having their checkpoints on the perimeter only.

Leclair said provincial police would also be refused entry on to their territory.

As the army moved into Kanesatake yesterday, it was business as usual in Kahnawake.

Soldiers and Mohawks continued throughout the day to fill holes and patch up roads that were damaged by barricades during the standoff.

It was not known when the work will be completed and the roads opened to traffic, said army information officer Capt. Donald Roy.

All roads have been fully repaired except for part of Route 138.