

TIOHTIÀ:KE PROJECT - MOHAWK COUNCIL OF KAHNAWÀ:KE REPORT ON SUPPLEMENTAL RESEARCH IN ORAL TRADITIONS

Gerald Taiaiake Alfred, Ph.D.
Manager, Oral History Research, Tiohtià:ke Project
Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke
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Supplemental research supporting the objectives of the Tiohtià:ke Project was conducted between February 2022 and March 2023 on oral history and ethnohistorical sources. The purpose of this work was to complete tasks outlined in the initial work plan for the oral history component of the Project that were not completed, or which were not adequately addressed, in earlier phases of the work due to issues experienced by contracted researchers or lack of information available at the time the previous work was conducted.

The work completed as part of the supplemental research included: Interviews conducted by Gerald Taiaiake Alfred with elders in Kahnawà:ke; research by Gerald Taiaiake Alfred on the origins and historical associations of the term *Tio'htià:ke* and the Mohawk language toponymy of Tiohtià:ke and surrounding area; and, a literature review by Jon Parmenter organized around the following themes: 1) Oral Traditions Associating the Mohawks with the St. Lawrence Valley Prior to Contact 2) Dispersal of the St. Lawrence Iroquoians and Implications for the Mohawk Nation 3) Establishment of Kahnawake After 1667 4) The Economy of Kahnawake's Fur Trade with New York, and, 5) Treaty Relations with the French and English Crowns to 1760.

Findings of the Research

Elders Interviews

Two elders identified by Christine Zachary Deom were interviewed, resulting in no information pertinent to the Project's themes (two others who were identified declined to be interviewed as they did not have any knowledge of the subject). This has confirmed our earlier conclusion that there is very little to no oral history remaining in the community related to the pre-contact and early-contact eras focused on the Tiohtià:ke / Montréal region.

Origins of the Name Tiohtià:ke and Toponymy

The supplemental research conducted confirmed that linguistic analyses and the engagement of traditional knowledge holders and Kanien'keha speakers with documentary sources can lead to new insights and help clarify outstanding issues around key questions, particularly related to place names and references to the landscape and contextualizing information in the historical record, and overall, reconciling Indigenous knowledge and perspectives with scientific perspectives relying on Western conceptions of evidence.

This is evidenced clearly in the perspective offered in the introduction to the Kahnawà:ke cultural centre's booklet on the history of Tiohtià:ke (currently in draft form) being prepared by the noted historian and language speaker, Teyowisonte Deer, the text of which is as follows:

The Kanien'kehá:ka have long held that the Montreal area and the St. Lawrence River valley is a part of its ancestral lands, despite challenges put forth by some present-day archaeologists and ethnologists who theorize that this area once occupied by a distinct indigenous nationality now referred to as the St. Lawrence Iroquois or Laurentian Iroquois, who are said to have mysteriously vanished by the time the French returned to the area in 1603, after Jacques Cartier visited the region in 1535. The Laurentian Iroquois theory is primarily based upon linguistic information harvested from Jacques Cartier's voyage journals and artifacts of material culture found in the Montreal area and along the St. Lawrence, that some archaeologists feel substantiates the notion that the people who lived in the Montreal area were not Kanien'kehá:ka, but an extinct Iroquoian nationality.

Most Kanien'kehá:ka reject this theory and have carried an ancient knowledge that Montreal and the St. Lawrence River Valley was a part of their ancestral homelands.

In an interview with Kahnawà:ke elder Billy Two Rivers, he shares a oral account that describes the presence of three prehistoric Kanien'kehá:ka villages that existed in the Montreal area – a Wolf Clan village on the south shore of the river (close to present-day Chateauguay), a Turtle Clan village also on the south shore (close to present-day La Prairie), and a Bear Clan village located on the island of Montreal, which could presumably be the Iroquoian city of Hochelaga that is described by Jacques Cartier during his second voyage to North America in 1535.

Other oral accounts that continue to drift around Kahnawà:ke is the idea that the island of Montreal was an important trade and political hub that intersected the frontier between Iroquoian peoples south of the St. Lawrence and Anishinaabe peoples north of the river.

Archaeological evidence would substantiate the idea the Iroquoian peoples and Anishinaabe people coexisted on the island of Montreal. This theory can be supported by the work of linguist Marianne Mithune, who theorizes that the Cartier word list reflects not one distinct Iroquoian dialect, but numerous Iroquoian dialects being spoken at during Cartier's visit in 1535.

While oral history is often dismissed by archaeologists and ethnologists, in some cases the written record can substantiate the Kanien'kehá:ka understanding. In Cadwallader Colden ethnographic classic, The History of the Five Indian Nations of Canada, written in 1727, Colden recounts an epic story of how a hunting dispute resulted in an Algonquin attack upon the Kanien'kehá:ka situated in the Montreal area who were then forced out of the region. This event supposedly takes place after Cartier's visit in 1535, which could explain in part the disappearance of the large Iroquoian village at Montreal when the French returned in 1603. This account is substantiated in local oral tradition in Kahnawà:ke, in which a hunting dispute between the Kanien'kehá:ka and Algonquians, resulted in a conflicts that forced. It is clear that even in 1727, the Kanien'kehá:ka knew that Montreal was their ancestral land.

In Les Mœurs Des Sauvages (1724), Father Joseph Lafitau relates an account from Kahnawà'kehró:non themselves concerning their origins, which suggests an earlier Kanien'kehá:ka presence along the St. Lawrence river prior to the Mohawk Valley and could substantiate that the Iroquois who were encountered by Cartier at Stadacona were in fact Kanien'kehá:ka:

"They came from the direction of the west... The Agnié (Mohawk) Iroquois assure us that they wandered a long time under the leadership of a woman named Gaihonriosk. This woman led them all through the north of America. She made them go to the place where the city of Quebec is now situated but, finding the terrain too irregular and the country, perhaps too disadvantageous because of the cold, she stopped at last at Agnié (Kanièn:keh)..."

If this account is accurate, it is possible that an ancestral Kanien'kehá:ka presence along the St. Lawrence River could predate their national identity as Kanien'kehá:ka, and before the creation of the Rotinonhsión:ni Confederacy. Regardless, the Kanien'kehá:ka can still reasonably claim the St. Lawrence River valley as their ancestral lands simply because they are an Iroquoian people to begin with. This is described by Kanien'kehá:ka scholar they are an Iroquoian people to begin with. This is described by Kanien'kehá:ka scholar Taiaiake Alfred as a 'circular argument'.

“Even if we grant that the people who lived here when the first French explorers arrived were not political organized a members of the (Rotinonhsión:ni) Confederacy, and were either re-organized as the Mohawk Nation or assimilated into the Mohawk Nation later, it is still undeniable that the native people of this territory were the ancestors of the Mohawks of Kahnawà:ke.”

To Kahnawà'kehró:non, there is no question – Montreal and the St. Lawrence river valley area remain their ancestral lands.

As part of this supplemental research, Teyowisonte and another community language expert and historian, Karhó:wane, were consulted and based on their knowledge, the following conclusions on the origin and meaning of the name Tiohtià:ke emerged (the discussion below respect the spelling convention used by the experts who were consulted):

- There is no authoritative or indisputable translation or explanation of the origin of the word as a place name for the Island of Montréal;
- The word *Tio'tià:ke*, on its own, is an incomplete word fragment, and it is most likely an abbreviation of a longer Kanien'keha word or possibly a Huron version of the word;
- The word may refer to the split between the Island of Montréal and Laval, which would be *Kawehnó:ke* (an island) *Teiotià:kon* (broken into two).
- The late Kahnawà:ke elder Billy Two Rivers cited an origin of the term as part of the word *Teionihtiohtià:kon*, which means “a fragmented group,” in reference to a story he told about when the Algonquins dispersed our people sometime after Cartier's first encounter. This would be consistent with the translation of the word cited by Charles Cooke, *Watonnitio'tiá:ke*, meaning “a group that split up,” except that Cook uses it – supported by the Jesuit Fr. Chauchetiere's version of events – in the context of the Hurons leaving Kenhtà:ke in 1672 to go to the Montagne mission on the Island of Montréal (which was also called *Kanehsatake* at the time) and thereafter in 1677 to go to Lorette.
- Historical maps of Montréal and the area contain references to *Ononta Tiotiake*, meaning “a mountain that's broken in two,” likely in reference to the two summits of Mount Royal. And there are also references to *Teiontiakon Oserake*, which is an archaic Kanien'keha word for “a beaver dam” (this would explain why some historians think Cartier's *Hochelaga* meant “Beaver Path”).

- Recent explanations of the origin of the name Hochelaga include *Otsirá:ka* (People of the Fire) and *Ohsia'á:ka* (People of the Hand), though these are not compelling, as historical linguistics has determined that the suffix *á:ka* (People of...) is a newer concept and would not have been used at that time in history, whereas *'ró:non'* (inhabitants) is an older suffix and is common in records from the 17th century and possibly earlier.

Some historical maps relevant to these questions were located as part of this supplemental research, as well as a set of contemporary maps produced by Kanién'kehaka knowledge holders with Kanien'keha toponymy – these are appended to this report.

Literature Review by Prof. Jon Parmenter

The literature review prepared by Jon Parmenter is appended to this report. In summary, it offers extremely detailed analysis of the existing historical and ethnographic materials and, engaging with established theories and understandings of the Haudenosaunee – Kahnawà:ke relationship and the St. Lawrence Iroquoian theory, offers a new perspective on key questions, particularly in relation to the Haudenosaunee – Kanién'kehaka relation to the St. Lawrence Valley, the context of trade, diplomacy and war prior to European arrival in the St. Lawrence Valley, and the dynamics of population shifts that impacted and defined the peopling of the area and cultural shifts and nationhood in the era prior to European encounters and in the early colonial period.

Of particular relevance to the work of the Project are Parmenter's conclusions on two key issues:

- 1) The preponderance of early Kahnawà:ke Mohawk oral tradition supports an understanding of the origins of the community as a reclamation or reoccupation of ancestral territory in the St. Lawrence Valley – particularly that portion of the St. Lawrence Valley in the vicinity of contemporary Montréal. This is a crucial, and nearly universally overlooked body of evidence that warrants careful consideration in light of the more frequently-cited archaeological evidence and documentary sources; and,
- 2) Archaeological evidence indicates a widespread movement of Laurentian Iroquois peoples throughout Algonquian- and Iroquoian-speaking communities throughout the region in voluntary, captive, and refugee contexts. Such evidence suggests that the Laurentian Iroquois either dispersed on their own and/or were gradually absorbed by multiple adversaries rather than being decimated in a one-time event.