

# ***The Fabricated Controversy***

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The Code of Handsome Lake or the Karihwí:io (good message) has been a primary source of controversy amongst the people of the Long House since its founding in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By taking on this particularly controversial subject, I realize that I open myself up to public scrutiny and possibly a target for some cowardly people. Therefore, before I proceed I want to make it clear that I am not a follower or believer of the Karihwí:io Code. This disclaimer is written as I will surely be labeled a “laker” and targeted by those readers who continue to fabricate lies or hold on to false beliefs that only hamper any serious movement towards real unification. Those of you who have been following my articles in the past will note the personal nature in which this article is written.

When I was in my teenage years, I developed a serious hatred for those Haudenosaunee who followed the Karihwí:io. I was taught by my role models that anyone who follows the Karihwí:io is violating Wampum 58 of the Seth Newhouse version of the Great Binding Law, a section that identifies those who have alienated themselves from the Haudenosaunee. I was taught that the Karihwí:io was a Christian based doctrine that was formalized as legislation designed to replace and dissolve the Kaianere’kó:wa. My anger was transmitted to others I associated with and at one point I even sent a letter to the Onondaga Nation Council denouncing the practice and accusing them of being conspirators against the Haudenosaunee.

As I grew older, I began to travel around Kanonhsonní:ke (Iroquois Country), meeting other Haudenosaunee; some of whom followers of the code. At first I would attack their beliefs, spitting out sharp words that did not originate from my own mind. I suppose I was an outlet for a whole generation of older, ignorant, and rigid ventriloquists. In time, as these people shared with me their worldview, I found that they were not pacifists, nor were they conspirators against the Kaianere’kó:wa spewing Christian dogma. I found that they strictly followed and believed in the Kaianere’kó:wa and had a strong sense of nationalism. After such encounters, I decided to study the written texts of the Karihwí:io Code and ask our leaders, their view and understanding of the code and its implications on our Iroquoian world. I wanted to find out the truth.

In this quest for enlightenment, I discovered that when the Long House ways began to filter back into Kahnawake in the 1920’s; the Karihwí:io was accepted as a intertwined artery of Kanonhsonni’kéha (the way of the Long House), and was in fact predominant in the Mohawk townships. Then, when a new generation of former Christians were introduced to the Long House and later cultivated as leaders within Kahnawake’s Council of Chiefs, a deep resentment for the Church shined through any of their deliberations and determinations. A deep hatred existed for anything that resembled the oppression they had experienced from the church, which indeed clouded their capacity to conduct council with ka’nikonhrí:io (a good mind).

I was told that some years later, in the more recent political endeavors of the Mohawk Nation, certain individuals recognized this innate resentment towards the code as a means to control and manipulate these leaders in order to influence the resolutions of the nation in their favor. In this sense the Handsome Lake debate became a fabricated controversy built upon a foundation of lies designed to control and steer the nation’s agenda and determinations as a means to consolidate

personal power and financial gain. The debate evolved into deep division, which crippled the effectiveness of the Mohawk Nation government and diluted its recognized authority. Unfortunately I was born into this cauldron of despair and the hatred of this generation absorbed me.

Then in 1998, after a long period of intense study regarding this issue, a friend of mine asked me to travel with him to Akwesasne for a “Convention” also known as the recital of the Karihwí:io. I accepted his invitation as a means of practicing my newly realized sense of open-mindedness. To my surprise my skin did not turn gray and fall off, nor was I converted by this alleged cult of anti-Great Law Quakers. I did not repent, nor do I now profess to be a follower of the code, although I must confess (no pun intended) that day I learnt a valuable lesson; a lesson of tolerance.

Tolerance is a vital ingredient in the foundation of the Kaianere’kó:wa and the Haudenosaunee worldview, for only in a society that embraces tolerance may we find true freedom, liberty, and unity. As I stated in the much needed disclaimer, I disagree with much of the Karihwí:io, but if it helps an individual to stop drinking, relearn our songs and ceremonies, and return to the Kaianere’kó:wa; then I will support that individual’s choice of lifestyle. Likewise, in compliance with our valued concept of tolerance, those who are devout followers of the code should not frown upon or punish those who practice only Kaianere’kó:wa and pre-Handsome Lake Long House teachings; a practice quite known to exist. Instead, let us share our most common links and aspirations as Haudenosaunee, Handsome Lake or not, and jointly live by Kaianere’kó:wa, kaié:ri niiori:wake, and maintain our strong nationalist beliefs that will enable us to jointly assert our rights as Haudenosaunee. Once we have this mutual respect and understanding, the hurdle of unity will be easily overcome.

Ever onward towards the good tidings of peace & power!