

Overcoming the Plateau

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“For millions of years, mankind lived just like the animals. Then something happened that unleashed the power of our imagination; we learned to talk.”

-Pink Floyd 1994

Kahnawake’s political scene seems to be currently in a state of plateau. In the past couple of months, all this author can see and hear in the local media are meetings and consultation gatherings designed to receive one thing; statistics. Let us analyze and interpret the current state of the revolution by stepping back to view the bigger picture and recognize our stalemate.

The community seems very skeptical in participating in any MCK initiated forum on traditional government, or on any important issue, in fear of their presence being construed into a mere statistical element of their so-called consultation process. Most traditionally minded people do their best to avoid such forums, as they believe that if they do participate, their simple presence would be only validating the Indian Act system in Kahnawake. Is this unfounded paranoia or is their reasoning behind this belief? I am not questioning the sincerity of this latest MCK initiative, but it must be recognized that they do have a poor track record in terms of previous consultation practices.

Last year, two of Kahnawake’s Long House bodies issued a joint statement to the MCK, indicating that they will not continue any dialogue with the MCK regarding the resurrection of a unified traditional government at Kahnawake unless they conformed to the terms presented. The most controversial of these terms is that the MCK must shelf all negotiations with Canada and Quebec until a return to traditional government is achieved. While I see this particular term as being somewhat harsh and a possible roadblock, I can understand and appreciate the logic behind the Long House motivation to include this term in their position. Again it is a matter of putting the cart before the horse, where the return to traditional government should be prioritized on the MCK agenda, for reasons that need not be reiterated for brevity reasons.

Regardless of how I view these conditions, I think it would be entirely appropriate for the MCK to conform to these terms if they sincerely believed in a unified traditional government, because if they truly desired this; this issue would take the helm of their agenda regardless of any other circumstance. However, they regard this option as an impossibility and will certainly continue to push the C/KR draft in order to use it as what they call a “bulletproof vest” against the First Nations Governance Act (FNG) which would seriously hurt not only the community; but more importantly the MCK’s infinite pot of gold.

While I don’t believe the MCK are involved in a conspiracy of JFK proportions, I do think that the motivations of some are questionable at best. Rather than being conspiratorial, I think their motives are quite academic whereby they must appease or submit to some community demands in order to achieve certain ambitious objectives. For example they must appease the community’s desire for traditional government, or at least their version of traditional government, in order to receive support for and validate the C/KR. With the C/KR accepted by both Kahnawake and the Government of Canada, they will be equipped with the ammunition to combat FNG. This entire

equation includes another vital factor; the element of time. The MCK does not have much time in order for this equation to become a reality, as the imposition of FNG looms in the shadows.

Of course it must be mentioned that there are those within the MCK system whose motives are truly sincere regarding the move towards a traditional government, and such persons are certainly in a “catch-22”. No matter the circumstance, such persons will be attacked for initiating any activity and they will be likewise attacked for no activity. It must be an unpleasant situation to be in.

Commonly I save a “happy ending” type solution for the closing of my commentaries, but finding a solution to this situation is quite difficult, as it sometimes seems that Kahnawake is similar to the Gaza Strip. Like the situation in Gaza, walls are erected and defended without compromise or at least a basic willingness to sit down together. Let it be recognized that any political processes in Kahnawake are now stuck in a plateau or stalemate. Perhaps the only way to budge the stalemate and escape the plateau is for everyone to take a gamble and extend the white roots of peace. It is possible to extend the good tidings of peace and power without having to compromise anything you believe in, nor do you have to be afraid to lose anything. The Kaianere’kó:wa is only a guide to solve problems and achieve peace, the crucial ingredient in order to actually solve problems and achieve peace is a more human factor found in an attentive ear and a compassionate heart among other qualities.

Ever onward towards the good tidings of peace and power!