

The signs of assimilation

A commentary by Teyowisonte (Thomas Deer)

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This author has always heard that some day in the future, street signs would be posted around our community and that such an act would surely reflect the final stages of Canadian colonization. After reading the Mohawk Council of Kahnawake (MCK) notice in the *Eastern Door*, in which they asked for community feedback, this author felt obligated to write a commentary addressing the this disturbing proposition.

According to the MCK notice, this proposal is designed to honor some Kanien'kehá:ka who have passed on; in other words to memorialize them. It is the way of the Kanien'kehá:ka not to memorialize the dead but to celebrate the living now and the renewal of life. When babies are bestowed a name in Kanien'kéha, it must be understood that such a name will only be occupied during the lifetime of that individual. When that individual passes on into the next sphere of life, that name does not retire or die with that individual, but is throw back among the bundle of names for another to have.

By memorializing individuals who have passed on, we are ignoring the essence of our culture and tradition, as a central aspect of Kanonhsonni'kéha (the way of the Long House) deals heavily with death and those dealing with death. From the Ten Day Feast to the Condolence Ceremony, we are constantly taught let go of hindrances such as grief, despair, and others obstructions that will cloud our minds. Moreover, we are taught not to dwell on to the past no matter how pleasant or unpleasant, for when we dwell on the past, we carry an unnecessary burden that will surly interfere with the path we are currently traveling upon.

This author is also opposed to this proposition for simpler reasons as well. The only reason that streets signs would be designed is to help foreigners understand and acquaint themselves with our territory; for economic reasons no doubt. The current community of Kahnawake was permanently settled in 1716 and in those 285 years we had no need or desire to vandalize the uniqueness of our community by urbanizing it with street signs. Already, Kahnawake is showing the signs of urbanization and communal decay; from curbs and sidewalks to vandalism. Why add to this unpleasantry by committing an act that is undoubtedly designed to accommodate non-natives? I think we've done enough to accommodate self-assimilation.

As much as I hate to, this author encourages those of the same mind to let the MCK know how you feel. Contact the MCK Communications Department through one on these outlets:

-Tel.: (450) 632-7500

-Fax: (450) 638-5958

-PO Box 720

-E-mail communication@mck.ca.

Remember, we don't need signs to honor those who have passed on, as we may do that by continuing in the path they left for us to follow. I plead with the people to heed the signs of assimilation.

Ever onward towards the good tidings of peace & power!