

# ***The Young People's Manifesto: A Mandate and Message for Kahnawake's Youth***

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## **Preface**

You are in the preliminaries of revolution, a cultural revolution waged against the colonization of indigenous nations of the Western Hemisphere. It is a fight that started in 1492 and continues to be battled today. It is the indigenous struggle to resist and stop colonial attempts at assimilation, and genocide. Since contact, the struggle has been fought by every generation before you and now the torch of indigenous resistance has been passed to you. It is a revolution that only the young people themselves can victor, for it is the young themselves who will eventually inherit not only the struggle but the responsibility to carry on our culture.

This Manifesto's primary function is to create a mandate and a course of action for the concerned young people of the Kahnawake Territory. The young people's fighting spirit seems to have dropped to a dangerous level and it needs to be resurrected. This manifesto's secondary goal is to educate and inspire the young people of Kahnawake to carry on the age-old struggle for national survival and recognition, combined with the indigenous resistance establishment determined to stop colonial oppression, assimilation and genocide, and promote independence, self-determination, and freedom.

## **I. A Choice**

Before continuing any further, you, the reader must make a choice. And the choice is a simple one. Are you a member of the Mohawks of Kahnawake or are you a citizen of the Mohawk Nation? You as a young man or woman are born by blood as a "member" of Kahnawake and a descendent of the Mohawk people. Merely being a member of Kahnawake isn't all that bad, for the collective population of Kahnawake are entitled to many benefits from the Government of Canada through its Indian Act. The benefits of being a recognized member of a Canadian "band" is almost free of responsibility. The only disadvantage is that you must conform to their standard of what is expected from an obedient member of a "band". In essence you would be merely an ethnic Canadian with special privileges.

However, being a citizen of the Mohawk Nation comes with a far larger burden of responsibility. Citizens of the Mohawk Nation are governed under the Great Law of Peace, the Constitution of the Iroquois Confederacy. Despite the many Long House denominations within the community of Kahnawake, the principles of peace, righteousness, and power remain universal among all these factions. Furthermore, only the untarnished objectiveness of the young people can unify the deep divisions caused the by the previous generation. Regardless of what religious denomination you belong to, all of our inherit rights as a sovereign people are contained within that institution of peace, righteousness, and power. Also contained within this traditional ideology, are specific responsibilities pertaining to the young people. The remainder of this manifesto applies to only those who have choice to be a citizen.

## II. The Responsibility of the Young People

From here forth, the decisions you make will not only affect your own future, but the future of an entire nation. It is a large responsibility to handle. Indeed, you are now embarking on a journey to resurrect and revive our troubled nation that suffers from disunity, disharmony, and cultural decay stemming from the seeds of colonization. Know that, it is only the spirit of the young people that can remedy these troubles. The torch of colonial resistance has now also been passed on to you to continue. This journey shall be long and hard and it will test your endurance and commitment. Adding to your struggle will be the heavy burden containing responsibility and sacrifice, among others.

As young people, the greatest ammunition you have to resist genocide and assimilation, happens to be the same fundamentals you are responsible for attaining and developing as the seventh generation. Among such responsibilities are,

- Learning and studying Kanienkeha (the Mohawk language).
- Learning and studying the history and culture of Kanienkehaka.
- Learning about and returning to traditional institutions (i.e. the Long House, the Great Law of Peace).
- Learning about and respecting Mother Earth and her natural medicines.
- Developing the inner “fighting spirit” in order to resist colonial efforts at genocide and assimilation.

It is crucial for our national and cultural survival that, you, the young people of Kahnawake make a conscious and noble effort to learn, study, and develop these fundamental responsibilities. Furthermore and lastly, As citizens of the Mohawk Nation you have a responsibility to promote and live by the traditional principles of peace, power and righteousness.

## III. Fighting Spirit

Throughout this text you will see many references to the *fighting spirit*. What is *fighting spirit* and how does one achieve it. *Fighting Spirit* refers to an inner psyche that thrives and desires on the pursuit of justice and freedom under the traditional principles of peace, righteousness, and power. It is a quality and mannerism that allows one to continue to resist colonial attempts at assimilation and genocide and it is also this trait that secures our cultural and national survival.

It would seem that young people have a natural supply of this state of spirituality. You can see and feel the raw determination and sacrifice when you play lacrosse or wrestle. You can see and feel the hope and passion when you speak. This state of spirituality is not tangible, but it is there nonetheless. As young people, there is a limited expenditure of fighting spirit burning within you. Use this time and harness this energy wisely and ruthlessly, for time and experience will cause the burning embers of your fighting spirit to cool and eventually burn out.

Although possible, once fighting spirit is lost, it becomes quite difficult to resurrect it. Only through intense inspiration and proper motivation, can this spirituality be summoned again.

#### **IV. Success and Victory**

In this context, the word success refers to your fulfillment of personal dreams, ambitions, and expectations by attaining where you to be and what you want to accomplish in life. Whether you want to be a doctor or a carpenter, an artist or ironworker. Regardless of your career choice, they all help our Nation in one way or another. Pursue your dreams, for time is an unforgiving circumstance in life. Keep in mind that mere monetary salvation is not success but rather a means to succeed. Success itself is individual concept and achievement, depending greatly upon what you want and how badly you want it.

The word victory, in this context, pertains to the eventual victory that secures our national and cultural survival. It also refers to the collective achievement of the traditional principles of peace, righteousness, and power as applied to our families, our community, and our Nation. The most paramount route to victory is through your own personal successes and achievements. Through your individual successes, using such traditional principles, a contribution is made to the greater good of the people, thereby asserting our nationhood and making us a more independent people. This constitutes a victory. Know that the Creator has bestowed upon you a gift of talent. Don't be greedy. Your talents were meant to be used as a contribution to society. Use it for our national and cultural survival. Victory is a collective concept made up of individual success and principles. Only those who have a strong mind, stern direction and a good heart will achieve success and victory.

#### **V. The Acquisition of Morale and Discipline**

Recently I had read a book containing the personal accounts of Che Guevara, a leader of the Cuban Revolutionary War and liberator of many South American nations. In one chapter he described the fundamental characteristics of a true revolutionary. Please note that such characteristics are also true for anyone in struggle for success and victory. Che stated that the acquisition of morale and discipline are the very foundations of a true revolutionary.

Morale is what gives a person the psychological drive and endurance needed to succeed and obtain victory, under the most demanding of conditions. Our traditional doctrines, such as the Creation Story and the coming of the Great Law, best exhibit the acquisition of morale as a spiritual base. It is that spiritual foundation of morale that inspires one to carry on and succeed at any cost. Morale also includes virtues such as, the spontaneity of risk, the tenderness of compassion, and the unquenchable desire for individual success and collective victory for all the people. Morality reflects all that is most righteous in the human spirit. In short, morale is a synonym for *fighting spirit*.

Discipline is the flip side of the same coin. Che classifies two types of discipline- one external and one internal. Che also believed that perfect balance of both is essential for both individual success and collective victories. External discipline resembles the mechanical nature of present day colonial powers. It is an unconscious discipline, in the same way soldiers march in perfect step, expressed for some outside skeptic or power

usually out of fear of reprisal. Although quite cold and mechanical in nature, it does contain and deserve some merit because it includes a keen sense of organization, structure, and goal setting. Note that man is a goal-oriented creature. By nature we must look forward to something in order to strive.

Internal discipline is acquired only when morality is acquired. It is a perfect exhibit of self restraint and self-motivation targeted for the common good of all the people. One who has acquired internal discipline does not use drugs or alcohol, nor does he or she lie, cheat or steal. This is not because he or she is afraid of the consequences or the disciplinary establishment; rather he or she refrains from doing such vices for the common good of the people. One whose mind is clear realizes that such vices harm our children, our family, our community, and ultimately destroys our Nation. Likewise he or she must stand as a great example to shine light upon those who have only been dormant in darkness and despair and help these people rekindle their “fighting spirit”. No one can stop your success or victory if you have developed and achieved a perfect balance of morality and discipline.

## **VI. The Democratic Rights of Kahnawake’s Youth**

As the future of our Nation, it is crucial that you have a voice in the determinations of our Nation. Unfortunately, the Indian Act System (the Constitution of the MCK) forbids and denies the voice of anyone under the age of 18. With such restrictions of the most basic of rights, such a system of government cannot be democratic.

Regardless of this colonial establishment’s attempt to undermine and discourage the natural *fighting spirit* of the young people, you do have rights as citizens of our Nation. Most importantly, you have the right to refuse, demand, and question any issue that affects your rights or your status as a nation.

## **VII. The Importance of Family**

Finally, we end this manifesto address the simplest form of any society; the family. Family is another important factory for our national and cultural survival. It is imperative that you try your best to maintain loving relations with your family, as the family is simplest unit of any social establishment. As such, if the family’s loving and caring structure breaks down, then the community’s virtuous social structure breaks down. Eventually when the community’s virtuous social structure breaks down, then the Nation, as an institution, will also break down.