

Forgotten Centuries stands as an example of a difficult job well done.

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Heeding the Voices of Our Ancestors: Kahnawake Mohawk Politics and the Rise of Native Nationalism. By Gerald R. Alfred. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1995. 220 pages. \$24.95 paper.

The Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy has been at the forefront of Native American assertions of sovereignty for many years. Even during the 1920s, a time that some commentators called "the era of the vanishing race," Deskaheh (Levi General) took the case for Iroquois sovereignty to the League of Nations, where diplomats from the United States, Canada, and Great Britain excluded him from the floor of that body. In the 1950s, the activism of Standing Arrow, Wallace (Mad Bear) Anderson, and others presaged nationwide campaigns by the American Indian Movement in the late 1960s and 1970s. Today, the Haudenosaunee issue their own passports and license plates. The history of Iroquois nationalism draws its inspiration from the traditions of the Great Law of Peace, which Gerald Alfred characterizes as the philosophy underlying "the first genuine North American federal system [of government]" (p. 78). Alfred details the attention paid at Kahnawake to incorporating the traditions of the Great Law of Peace into decision-making.

As in other parts of Indian Country, sovereignty and nationalism have many interpretations in Haudenosaunee (and especially in Mohawk) Country. Some Mohawk people have interpreted these terms to mean the right to transport large amounts of liquor, cash, cigarettes, and semiautomatic weapons between the United States and Canada. At Akwesasne, a short drive from Kahnawake, sovereignty has been used to justify the operation of casinos that New York State law maintains are illegal without a state compact.

Gambling has never done much at Kahnawake, but a large number of Canadians buy tax-free cigarettes there. As Gerald Alfred, himself a Kahnawake Mohawk, points out in his richly detailed study *Heeding the Voices of Our Ancestors: Kahnawake Mohawk Politics and the Rise of Native Nationalism*, this reserve near Montreal offers native nationalists much more than cheap smokes.

The reserve offers four nationalistic options—three longhouses and the Mohawk Council of Kahnawake, which was established under the Canadian Indian Act and is still funded mainly by the Canadian federal government.

According to Alfred, an assistant professor of political science at Montreal's Concordia University, Kahnawake "leads Canada in developing alternatives to the system of colonial domination of Indian nations" (p. 148). The band council has gradually assumed jurisdiction over large portions of the reserve's day-to-day governmental infrastructure. The MCK espouses Mohawk nationalism and practices it through such measures as the superintendency of the reserve's independent police force, the Peacekeepers. The reserve has assumed complete control over its own schools, and after a bitter battle with Quebec authorities, the province's language laws are no longer enforced at Kahnawake. The MCK also maintains ties with the Iroquois Confederacy at Onondaga. In other areas, such as provision of health and some social services, provincial agencies and those on the reserve maintain cordial, cooperative relations.

The image of one governmental structure being born in the shell of another fits Alfred's emphasis on "syncretism," the combination of many diverse elements into a contemporary whole. We are reminded that Kahnawake (like Akwesasne, also called St. Regis) began from the syncretic elements of Mohawk tradition and Catholic mission work.

In addition to the MCK, the political landscape at Kahnawake includes three distinct longhouse communities. Members of the "Mohawk Trail" Longhouse at Kahnawake subscribe to the traditionalist Code of Handsome Lake. Like the MCK, it is strongly allied with the Grand Council at Onondaga. A second longhouse at Kahnawake is maintained by the Warrior Society, which claims, in the words of its founder Louis Hall (who died in 1993), that the Code of Handsome Lake comprises "the hallucinations of a drunk." Kahnawake is the birthplace of the Warrior Society, which played a crucial role in the Mohawk Country crisis of 1990 at Kahnawake, Akwesasne, and Kanesatake (Oka). Another longhouse is usually called the Five Nations Longhouse, which "focuses its attack on injustices perpetrated by White society and deprecates those Mohawks who co-operate with non-native authorities or who work within established institutions" (p. 86).

According to Alfred, the Warrior Longhouse has taken from the Great Law of Peace "a completely political interpretation

based on the assertion of Mohawk Power *vis à vis* the state" (p. 85). Alfred observes that the Warriors have stripped cultural and spiritual concepts from the Great Law and interpreted it as a revolutionary manifesto. Alfred believes that the Warriors' concepts of sovereignty and nationalism "[have] nothing to do with ideas contained in the Great Law of Peace and [are] drawn directly from European thought on the pre-requisites of statehood" (p. 85). Nevertheless, writes Alfred, the Warrior Longhouse "has consistently been the institution most representative of Kahnawake's traditionalists as a whole" (p. 85).

Alfred heretofore has been known for his insightful treatment of the 1990 Mohawk Country crisis at Kahnawake in the Cornell American Indian Program's *Akwe:kon Journal* (now titled *Native Americas*) while he was a graduate student there. *Heeding the Voices of Our Ancestors*, which was begun as Alfred's Ph.D. dissertation at Cornell, provides abundant historical analysis of the enmity between French Canadians and Mohawks, which began with Samuel de Champlain's initial invasion in 1609. Champlain, writes Alfred, "unleashed his arquebus as the [Mohawk] warriors approached, blasting through their wood-bone armour and killing many of them, including the war chiefs" (pp. 29-30).

Almost four centuries later, in 1990, after Kahnawake Mohawk people blocked the Mercier Bridge into Montreal, French Canadians burned them in effigy, stoned their cars, and beat Mohawk people in local shopping centers. The nightly riots in Chateauguay, a suburb of Montreal that was cut off from the city by the Mohawk blockade of the Mercier Bridge, showed a raw side of the centuries-long antipathy between French Canadians and several native peoples within Quebec's putative borders. Eighty-five percent of Quebec was never ceded by treaty; the rhetoric of Quebec sovereignty leaves little room for the emerging Mohawk nationalism that Alfred traces so ably in *Heeding the Voices of Our Ancestors*.

Although governmental structures have become increasingly autonomous at Kahnawake, the private economy has not yet followed suit. Alfred notes that two-thirds of the recorded income on the reserve comes from government transfer payments. These totals do not include sizable but untallied amounts from the cigarette trade and other forms of smuggling. The size of this trade may be indicated by the following anecdote: A Mohawk who will remain nameless because of the circumstances witnessed the sale of a small island in the Saint Lawrence River, probably as a base for smuggling operations. This Mohawk said that the purchaser

of the island removed \$200,000 in large bills from a stack six feet tall up the side of a closet. "The \$200,000 barely left a dent in the pile," the observer said.

Rejection by the Kahnawake Mohawk of Canadian assimilation is described in detail by Alfred, who leaves no doubt that the climactic event was the expropriation of land for the St. Lawrence Seaway during the late 1950s. Nationalism in all its variations has been increasing during the four decades since the construction of the seaway, which not only resulted in the unilateral expropriation of land but also ruined the last vestiges of a traditional way of life once based on hunting, trapping, and fishing.

The expropriation and construction were resisted mightily by nearly everyone at Kahnawake. An MCK statement at the time said, "Humanity blushes at the events of this history of Colonial History, and Dictatorship, and Usurption" (p. 161). For the Kahnawake Mohawk people, the seaway was a stark lesson in the nature of Canadian power and politics. The Kahnawake Mohawk have been withdrawing from the Canadian system ever since. According to Alfred's analysis, whatever faith that the Mohawk had in Canadian institutions "evaporated" after the events related to the seaway (p. 161).

Alfred recommends that the Kahnawake Mohawk serve as an example of how many nationalities can live together in "a plural state," of which Canada could be a premiere example (p. 190). To do this would demand that Canada "abandon its incorporative imperative" toward native peoples. "Unfortunately," he concludes, "the ideal state exists only in theory" (p. 191).

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Home Places: Contemporary Native American Writing from Sun Tracks. Edited by Larry Evers and Ofelia Zepeda. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995. 97 pages. \$19.95 cloth; \$9.95 paper.

This gathering of poetry, songs, stories, and autobiographical writing published previously in *Sun Tracks* over its now twenty-five years of existence is at once an eloquent and a meaningful commemoration of that publication's evolution as an eclectic venue for some of the best imaginative work done by American