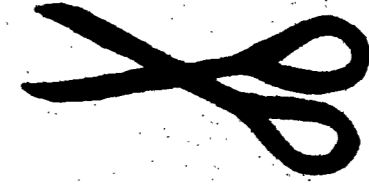


# CLIP AND SAVE



## History of Akwesasne and the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne — "Community Government is Not New".

Note: This historical chronology was researched with the participation of both the St. Regis Tribal Council and the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne.

- 1664 Two Row Wampum Belt given to the British by the Confederacy at the Treaty of Fort Albany. Reaffirms that Iroquois people and white people have two distinct ways of life and government and that neither should interfere with the working of the other.
- 1740 Seven Nations of Canada is recognized as a sub-government under the Iroquois Confederacy. Seven Nations speaks through Onondaga.
- 1755 Akwesasne is established as a permanent community with people coming directly from the Mohawk Valley and some from Kahnawake.
- 1763 The Royal Proclamation is made and is frequently called the Charter of Indian Rights. The Royal Proclamation is said to recognize pre-existing land rights of Indians. It does not create rights but rather affirms old rights. The basic design of the Proclamation was to create a large area of land "reserved" for Indian people.
- 1769 Community government is formed at Akwesasne using the traditional Iroquois system. Life Chief government institutes community government at Akwesasne and uses 12 chiefs and 12 clan mothers.
- 1783 Treaty of Paris between Great Britain and the United States sets their border at the 45th parallel, directly through Akwesasne Territory. This division has no effect on the Life Chief Community government at Akwesasne.
- 1794 Jay Treaty of Amity and Commerce between the United States and Great Britain. Indians are assured border-crossing rights.
- 1795 Joseph Brant who was not a Mohawk Chief signs away Mohawk lands in a quit-claim to New York State.
- 1796 Three individuals from Kahnawake without authority to do so quit-claimed the land in Mohawk Territory that was set aside by the Mohawk Nation for use by the Seven Nations to New York State, reducing land at Akwesasne to a six-mile square and three other small parcels of land. The three individuals who signed away the land were Ohnawewio (Goodstream), Louis Cook (a Black/Abenaki man) and William Gray (a white man). They were exiled from Kahnawake for compromising Akwesasne lands.
- 1801 William Gray who was a white man told NY State that he was eligible for Akwesasne land because he married a Mohawk woman and by his reckoning he was therefore an Indian. William Gray the white man is granted Akwesasne land by NY State on that basis.
- 1802 NY State takes it upon themselves to appoint three men to transact business between the Life Chief Community Government and NY State. Three men are called Trustees.
- 1806 Oswegatchie which is one of the Seven Nations seats gives up its title within the Seven Nations and its land base to Akwesasne.  
Akwesasne takes a place as a member of the Seven Nations of Canada which is a sub-government of the Iroquois Confederacy. Akwesasne maintains Life Chief Community Government.
- 1812 War of 1812 between the United States and Great Britain. Akwesasne was to remain neutral, but both sides raised some force of Akwesasne men to fight for either side. The traditional Life Chief Council still acted as Akwesasne's Community Government even though some of its people had special interests in the British or American groups.  
The War of 1812 left our people very poor.  
The money from 1796 treaty and land leases were slow in getting to our people.
- 1813 Famine at Akwesasne.
- 1815 The Treaty of Ghent between Great Britain and the United States formalized the border between these two nations. The traditional Life Chief Government still was entrusted as the Community Government at Akwesasne.
- 1816 Famine at Akwesasne.
- 1818 The Indian agent took away the Life Chief councils power to collect rents. The British Indian agent named John Johnson decided not to let those who were neutral or those who fought for the Americans during the War of 1812, have any rent money. He told them that they had to live on the U.S. side of Akwesasne.
- 1821 Some of those who were forced by the British to live on the "US" side of Akwesasne formed an American party of 12 men which copied how the Life Chief council looked. On their own without any power, they did business with New York State. Even though the Life Chief Council still was the official government at Akwesasne, these men who were the relatives of the first trustees were pretending to be the official Akwesasne government.  
These men transacted many land sales of Akwesasne territory without power to do so.
- 1820-
- 1850 Akwesasne was hit with many epidemics of diseases and it is estimated that one-half of Akwesasne's population died during this time.
- 1841 Because the American party was cut off from rental moneys from lands on the "Canadian" side, they protested to NY State that only the U.S. side of Akwesasne should get annuity money from the 1796 treaty.
- 1842 The Webster-Ashburton Treaty was signed which reaffirmed the US-Canadian Border. In doing so a border marker was placed in the center of St. Regis Village. When our people saw this they started believing that they were "American" and "Canadians" The Seven Nations Grand Council came to Akwesasne and proclaimed that Akwesasne was territory to be used by all Akwesasne people despite whether they had fought for the British or Americans in the War of 1812.
- 1852 The Life Chief Traditional Community Government which had fought hard to keep one government at Akwesasne retreated to the "Canadian" side. They left the trustee system on the "U.S." side.
- 1869 An Act of Parliament of Canada said that Indian bands should have elections but that Life Chiefs could continue for life unless the governor deposed them for what he called misconduct.
- 1879 Some men decided to have elections at Akwesasne according to the Indian Act. Only two men were put in, but a real election by the community did not occur. The Life Chief Community Government of 12 men was still in power and they met in a general council and allowed the two elected men to participate.
- 1881 Cornwall Island decided to have an election of their own and a few people put in one man. This meant that there were a total of 3 elected men in office, who were sent to general council meetings with 12 Traditional Life Chiefs who were formed the Community Government.
- 1883 The Government of Canada wanted Akwesasne to have elected chiefs, but the Life Chiefs and their Community Government were the ones who had the real power from the people. Sir John A. MacDonald said that the Life Chiefs were in no way to be interfered with.
- 1884 Even though the Government of Canada passed the Indian Advancement Act and wanted Akwesasne to have elected Chiefs, we were happy with our Traditional Community Government.
- 1886 By this time the Community just let the elected men's terms run out and didn't bother to have any elections. The Life Chief Community Government was in power.  
In the Life Chief System three of the Chiefs had special duties and were known as 1) the Head Chief 2) the Big Man and 3) the Crier.
- 1888 The Iroquois Confederacy decided that it was important to make sure that there was a Mohawk Nation seat in N.Y. State in case the U.S. government would call the treaties with the Five Nations invalid.  
At a Grand Council in Cold Spring, Akwesasne was chosen to hold the fire for the Mohawk Nation. The Traditional Life Chief Community Government which was on the Canadian side was kept and another traditional style government was established on the U.S. side of Akwesasne. The "Crier" of the Life Chief Council-- Community Government, along with two other Life Chiefs were seduced by the promises of the Canadian Government and signed away the Dundee lands, even though the three men did not have the authority to do so.  
This angered the rest of the Life Chief Council who protested the action of these three men.  
Later this year that Life Chief who signed away Dundee Lands was elected by a few people as an elected chief. The other two wanted to be elected but were not chosen.  
The Life Chief/Mohawk Nation system on the American side had 9 chiefs, 9 vice-chiefs and 9 clan mothers. One of the Life Chiefs was also the clerk among the American Trustee system.
- 1899 The elected chiefs on the Canadian side lasted until 1899 with very little participation by the Community. Some Life Chiefs would become elected to make sure that the decisions of the Life Chief Community Government were followed. The elected system still caused much disagreement in Akwesasne. Finally, a man named John Fire (also known as John Ice or Jake Ice) was killed protecting his brother Jacob Fire from being arrested for not wanting elections at Akwesasne.
- 1899 Other Akwesasne people were arrested including 7 Life Chiefs and 10 people who believed in the Traditional Community Government.  
With jail terms hanging over their heads the Indian Agent took a few people to Cornwall to have an election. Almost all the Life Chiefs were forced to participate in the election process.  
On the American side the trustees wanted to have election by the Community but the Traditional Community Government told them if they were going to act like white people, that they would have to go and vote where white people lived.
- 1900 The Life Chiefs were elected but as terms ran out no new election was held. The people went back to the Traditional Community Government until 1915 when elections were forced again.
- 1915 Meanwhile the Indian Act rules and regulations were piling up like 'Horse Oh'ta'! Our women were not allowed to participate in the elections and only half of Akwesasne people and territory were recognized by either Canada or the U.S.  
All our moneys from rental of our lands was looked after by Indian Affairs and they would let us use it if they saw fit.
- 1920 The Indian Act said we had to go away to school. So, our people were rounded up and sent far away to Indian Affairs Boarding schools where they hoped we would forget our language and culture.
- 1951 Our women were finally allowed to vote in "band" elections.
- 1952 The Community Government known as the Iroquois of St. Regis Band Council had a system of 12 Councilors which is a take off from the old traditional system that we wouldn't let go.  
The Seaway had the right under the Indian Act to expropriate our Mohawk lands. Despite all our efforts, our lands were expropriated, our fishing was destroyed, islands were flooded.  
Contaminated soil was dumped on our farmlands and leaches into our ground water to this day.  
Some of the Seaway promises have never been kept and are still problems for us today.
- 1968 Akwesasne People protest infringement on border-crossing rights affirmed in the Jay Treaty of 1794.
- 1969 The "White Paper" which was proposed by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau was shot down by Indians across Canada and stopped the Canadian government plans to assimilate Indian people.
- 1980 The Jock Decision reaffirms our membership rights at Akwesasne. Canadian courts recognize Akwesasne as one community.
- 1982 The Canadian Constitution comes to Canada and initiates the First Ministers Conference.
- 1984 Akwesasne Mohawk Council Chiefs obtain portfolios while in office.  
Began Community Government process.
- 1985 Bill C-31 is an amendment to the Indian Act that stops discrimination on the status of Indian Women.
- 1987 MCA with Community approval takes over control of Indian Education for those at Akwesasne, on a three year trial basis only  
MCA with Community approval takes control over the membership of its people. Canadian First Minister's talk on Self-Government break down.
- 1988 MCA with Community approval takes over its election guidelines.
- 1990 Mohawk Council of Akwesasne requests community input on community government proposal.

### COMMUNITY GOVERNMENT - Its Not New -

If you want to know more information about community government, CKON will be regularly airing skits & info bytes 7 days a week.

The air time schedule for community government is:

Monday to Friday  
8 a.m. - 10 a.m.

(additional airings through Tuesday's Radio Bingo)

Saturday

Noon - 9 p.m.

3 Bytes & 1 Skit

Sunday

Noon - 9 p.m.

2 Bytes & Skits