

Kontinóhstats ne Kanien'kéha – Mohawk Language Custodian Association (MLCA)

Position Paper on the Site Recommendation for a Kanehsatà:ke Heritage Centre in Kanehsatà:ke

Kontinóhstats ne Kanien'kéha or the MLCA strongly advocate for:

1. A Mohawk Heritage Centre; and,
2. That it be constructed at the former LaMennais School Site.

The rationale is simple. Residents of Kanehsatà:ke cannot point out to one clearly visible facility throughout the territory that tells a visitor or traveller on Route 344 - that *this is a Kanien'kehá:ka community*. There are no facilities that show that we have been living here for centuries. There is no dedicated space that has been set aside to celebrate and share our proud history, culture and language. There are no opportunities or local venue for our talented artists and craftspeople to demonstrate to visitors, the ancient and contemporary art and crafts that are still practiced today.

There is no permanent structure that our children, youth, Elders and community can all gather and point to with pride – that our ancestors and we, their descendants - have promised to keep our unique and precious civilization alive for future generations.

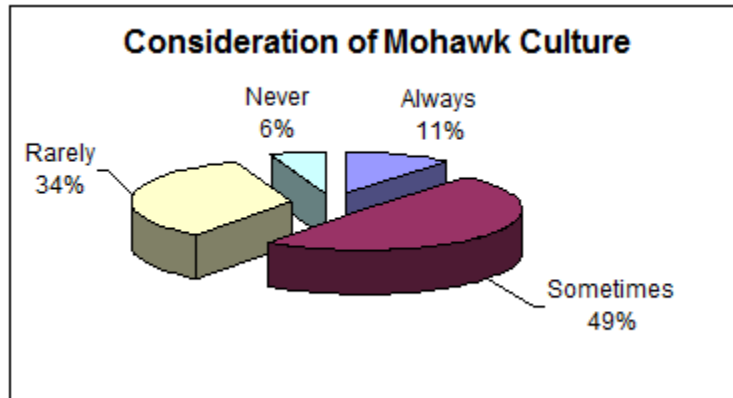
The time for action is now. Together, we can create a beautiful legacy for the future.

FINDINGS FROM A COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

To illustrate the steady erosion of our proud history, culture and language within Kanehsatà:ke, First Line Services Advisory Committee distributed their **“Summary Report on Community Assessment, June 2011.”** Over 500 individuals from the community responded to two relevant questions:

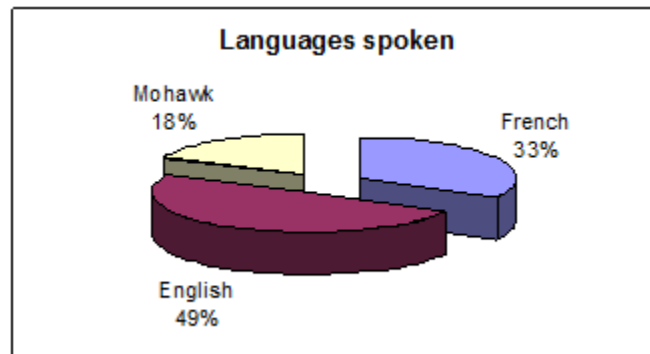
3.3 Consideration of Mohawk Culture

The respondents felt that Mohawk culture was considered only sometimes by the different workers and organizations in Kanehsatà:ke, with only **11%** stating they “**always**” considered Mohawk culture.



1.4 Language

The majority (49%) of the respondents speak English, with 33% speaking French and 18% speaking Mohawk:



The First Line Services Advisory Committee’s Summary Report states that Kanehsatà:ke respondents provided suggested activities, such as:

- Culturally-based Recreational Programs
- Elder/youth interaction to verbally transfer aspects of our Mohawk culture
- Mohawk Language courses
- Vocational Education for Youth – wood working

- Farming & gardening.

The Summary Report further noted that to address social issues, they recommended, in order of choice:

#2 – Revitalizing Mohawk language

#4 – Increasing economic opportunities and employment

#6 – Increasing recreational and social programming

#10 – Providing positive role models

#15 – Creating cultural continuity.

It is the position of the Mohawk Language Custodian Association that all these recommended activities from the First Line Services Report are critical aspects that can be addressed through a Heritage Centre – working collaboratively with any service organization.

A Heritage Centre that is located in Kanehsatà:ke in a site that is visually prominent – as the LaMennais site would provide.

A Heritage Centre Should Provide:

ACCESSIBILITY

- Primary Users - First and Foremost: To our schools, students, teachers, parents, Elders and our community. A clear message that “We are still here!”
- To our traditional gardens, medicine walks, language and cultural workshops, including theatre productions

PROXIMITY: UNDER OUR FULL JURISDICTION AND CONTROL

- Our Kanien’kehá:ka history, culture and language - our voices determine the messages

- By working closely with our community schools, we can ensure our children, youth and adults have opportunities to learn and in turn, to teach others

MEANINGFUL JOBS – Culture and Language as Foundation

- On site venue to showcase our talented artists and craftspeople – demonstrations and meaningful interaction with our guests
- Honouring and valuing our Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers with employment – our teachers for the next seven generations.
- Encouraging our youth and adults to become fluent Mohawk, English and French speakers, who are culturally strong and proud of our Kanien'kehá:ka heritage.

IMMEDIATE ACTION REQUIRED

There have been a number of studies, including a Feasibility Assessment, that have been done since 2005. Ten years have been lost and it is our recommendation that any further Feasibility Studies NOT be conducted. A clear roadmap of what we need to do is found within these documents.

MLCA strongly recommends the following actions begin immediately.

1. Community Consultation – Focus Groups of Youth, Elders, Adults to discuss:
 - a. Support for a Heritage Centre
 - i. Suggestions for design; key elements within the Heritage Centre, etc. [museum, gift shop, workshop, conference room, theatre, traditional gardens, medicine walking paths, café, archives for genealogical and historical research, etc.]
 - ii. Organizing a Planning Advisory Committee
 - b. Site recommendations - Heritage Centre and Traditional garden
 - c. Addressing the problems of vandalism and destruction of public property and other issues of concern that may arise from the community consultation.

Níawen'ró:wa

Kontínóhstats ne Kanien'ke:há Board of Directors