

## Indigenous Interruptions

### Mohawk Nationhood, Citizenship, and the State

Unless you are one of the first Americans, a Native American, we are all descended from folks who came from somewhere else. The story of immigrants in America isn't a story of them. It's a story of us. . . . For just as we remain a nation of laws, we have to remain a nation of immigrants.

—US President Barack Obama, July 4, 2012

We are representing a nation, and we are not going to travel on the passport of a competitor.

—Tonya Gonella Frichner, Iroquois Nationals Lacrosse Team spokesperson and negotiator, World Lacrosse Championships, July 19, 2010

What does it mean to refuse a passport—what some consider to be a gift or a right, the freedom of mobility and residency? What does it mean to say no to these things, or to wait until your terms have been met for agreement, for a reversal of recognition, or a conferral of rights? What happens when we refuse what all (presumably) “sensible” people perceive as good things? What does this refusal do to politics, to sense, to reason? When we add Indigenous peoples to this question, the assumptions and the *histories* that structure what is perceived to be “good” (and utilitarian goods themselves) shift and stand in stark relief. The positions assumed by people who refuse “gifts” may seem reasoned, sensible, and in fact deeply correct. Indeed, from this perspective, we see that a good is not a good for everyone.

The Mohawks of Kahnawà:ke are nationals of a precontact Indigenous polity that simply refuse to stop being themselves.<sup>1</sup> In other words, they insist on being and acting as peoples who belong to a nation other than the United States or Canada. Their political form predates and survives “conquest”; it is tangible (albeit strangled by colonial governmentality) and is tied to sovereign practices. This architecture is not fanciful; it is in place because the Mohawks of Kahnawà:ke share a genealogical kinship relationship with other native peoples in North America and they *know this*. They refuse to *let go of this knowledge*. In fact, they enact this knowledge through marriage practices, political engagements, and the way they live their lives. Their genealogical and political connectedness is part of a covenant—the decision-making Iroquois Confederacy called Haudenosaunee—which is made up of clans that spread across territory. As Indigenous peoples they have survived a great, transformative process of settler occupation, and they continue to live under the conditions of this occupation, its disavowal, and its ongoing life, which has required and still requires that they give up their lands and give up themselves.

What is the self that I speak of that they will not give up? The course of this book will unpack this for us, but most commonly that self is conflated with the figure of the ironworker and understood, in largely celebratory terms, through this image. Ironworkers are (usually) men who put up the infrastructure for skyscrapers, bridges, and all sorts of other large-scale construction jobs all over the United States and Canada,<sup>2</sup> but Kahnawà:ke labor is most associated with cities in the northeastern United States. They are famous for traveling from Kahnawà:ke on Sunday night to get to New York City (or Buffalo, or Ithaca, or as far as Detroit) by Monday morning.<sup>3</sup> This is a life of difficult, dangerous labor, and intense travel, and a life that returns, the literature of various sorts tells us, back to the “reserve” as much as the job and drive time can allow. In his very popular *New Yorker* piece, Joseph Mitchell started his article on ironwork and Kahnawà:ke in the following way: “The most footloose Indians in North America are a band of mixed-blood Mohawks whose home, the Caughnawaga Reservation, is on the St. Lawrence River in Quebec” (1959).<sup>4</sup>

This popular notion of the ironworking Mohawk, specifically from Kahnawà:ke, will not be lost because it is tied up with capital and the material reproduction of the community as well as postindustrial skylines.

But much of this book charts out the other labor that these people have undertaken and still undertake to maintain themselves in the face of a force that is imperial, legislative, ideological, and territorial and that has made them more than men who walk on beams. Their masculinized labor on iron matters to them, and to others, and I suspect will continue to matter as long as there is a market for construction. Yet the community is more than that form of labor can signal.

This community is now a reservation, or “reserve,” located in what is now southwestern Quebec, a largely Francophone province in Canada. It is a reserved territory of approximately 18.55 miles. However, it belongs to people who have moved through the past four hundred years from the Mohawk Valley in what is now New York State to the northern part of their hunting territory—partially where they are now. Present-day Kahnawà:ke was a seigniorial land grant that became a reserve held in trust for the use and benefit of these “footloose” mixed-blood Mohawks—Mohawks, who, I will demonstrate through the course of this book, are not “mixed blood.” In fact, they are Indigenous nationals of a strangulated political order who do all they can to live a political life robustly, with dignity *as* Nationals. In holding on to this, they interrupt and fundamentally challenge stories that have been told about them and about others like them, as well as the structure of settlement that strangles their political form and tries to take their land and their selves from them. As with all Indigenous people, they were supposed to have stepped off the beam that they walked on and plummeted to the ground several times through the course of their historical lives. Staying on top of a beam has involved effort and labor that extends beyond even the hard work of putting up steel. Since the time of Lewis Henry Morgan, this is the labor of living in the face of an expectant and a *foretold* cultural and political death. As such it is the hard labor of hanging on to territory, defining and fighting for your rights, negotiating and maintaining governmental and gendered forms of power.

Much of this labor I am talking about is tied up with a care for and defense of territory—so I will tell you first about this place and its institutions. If one desires a sociological sketch, the community has, as a federally recognized First Nation, accepted transfer funds from the government of Canada to build these institutions; other times they are completely self-funded. There is a Band Council, or “tribal government”; an in-patient

hospital; a community services center with an economic development office; a bank with tellers; an ATM; a post office. Thus they have their own postal code, a sports arena, an Elders Lodge, a police force with a negotiated power to issue warrants and tickets for arrest (The Kahnawà:ke Peacekeepers). They have an AAA junior hockey team (the Condors), online gaming, an adult male lacrosse team (the Kahnawake Mohawks),<sup>5</sup> a community court, grocery stores (two with fresh produce and a butcher), gas stations, golf courses, two children's schools, a middle school, a high school (the Kahnawà:ke Survival School), a Catholic church, a Protestant church, two Longhouses, between five to ten sit-down restaurants, an Internet provider, a bilingual (Mohawk-English) TV station, a radio station, an offshore gaming host site (Mohawk Internet Technologies), poker houses, smoke shacks, cigarette manufacturing factories, a bingo hall, a taekwondo gym, poker houses, a fabulous restaurant to get mixed drinks: "The Rail." There is a funeral home, a bakery shop, an education center, an optometrist with expensive, designer frames. There is a flower shop; antique stores; a shop that sells hypoallergenic and handcrafted soaps and bath salts; craft shops that sell moccasins, blankets, and objects for community members and tourists. In its economic past, there have been chip stands (selling French fries and pickled eggs) lining the highway, a dance hall, pizza parlor, a taco stand, beloved and now closed convenience stores such as Evelyn's, sit-down and takeout restaurants such as Rabaska's—closed due to fire and mourned as the passing of truly great pizza. There was a great bookstore, Mohawk Nation Books. The one public, coin-operated telephone is defunct but still in front of Rabaska's, on Highway 120, which connects Kahnawà:ke to Chateauguay, the south shore of Montreal and routes leading to the United States and north into Montreal and beyond, Oka, Quebec City, and so forth.

Indeed, there are many ironworkers, along with office workers; teachers; band councilors (called "chiefs" by the Indian Act); scholars;<sup>6</sup> three lawyers; one professional, retired hockey player; at least two who were semipro; many lacrosse players; fast-pitch softball players; two Olympians; several journalists (and two award-winning newspapers); musicians; filmmakers (two specifically are documentarians); actors; actresses; two former professional wrestlers, one who has now passed (his son is a conductor). There are people on social assistance and people who refuse social assistance and medical coverage because they do not recognize Canada.

There are veterans of every branch of the US armed forces, veterans of every war or conflict the United States has been in, even though this is on the Canadian side of the International Boundary Line. There are also veterans of the Canadian armed forces, members of the traditional Warrior Society who were en pointe during the “Oka Crisis,” clan mothers, traditional people who live according to the precepts of the Kaianere’kó:wa, or Great Law of Peace, only. I have interviewed one person (out of thirty-six) who voted in a Canadian election. The Catholic Church at Kahnawà:ke houses the partial, bodily remains of the “first” Mohawk saint, and second Indigenous saint in church history, Kateri Tekakwitha, who was canonized in 2012.

That is the institutional face of the reserve. Its geographical limits are marked by two steel crosses, illuminated at night, that commemorate the passing of thirty-three (out of ninety-six) ironworkers who fell to their deaths when the Victoria bridge collapsed in 1907. There is now another memorial to their passing.<sup>7</sup> The riverfront of this community was expropriated by an order in Canadian Parliament in 1954 to construct a seaway that would facilitate commercial transport from the Port of Montreal to Lake Erie through the construction of a “deep draft waterway” through the St. Lawrence River, so it seems today as if ocean liners and freights move through it or in front of it or in back of the reserve, depending on how you see things. There is a train bridge that cuts through the reserve and over it along with the Mercier Bridge. This is a bridge that is perpetually under construction—travel on it is slow, tedious, and feels dangerous as it is decrepit. It connects this reserve to Montreal, across the St. Lawrence River and the aforementioned seaway. You can drive to Chateaugay in the opposite direction in five to ten minutes. When traffic is right you can get to LaSalle (Montreal) in 10, downtown Montreal in 15, and Pierre Elliot Trudeau airport in 20 minutes to 25 minutes; Vermont in 2 hours; Plattsburgh, New York, in 1.5 hours; Oka or Kanehsatà:ke, in 2 hours; Ahkwesáhsne in 1 hour; Toronto in 4 to 5 hours; New York City in 6 to 8 hours; and Ithaca, New York, as I did regularly for three years, in 6.5 hours. There are people who have walked the train bridge to Lachine, took boats to cross the seaway to Montreal.

As with the territorial body that was just described, the content of the corporeal bodies that inhabit and care for the place, are also crossed by markers and other histories of intent. With settler colonialism came “res-

ervationization” and a radical shift in Indigenous diets and their bodies. As a result their blood is excessively “sweet” and has a high prevalence of diabetes—a bodily indicator of these spatial and dietary transitions. Rates in Kahnawà:ke are high,<sup>8</sup> and there are people who have had to have their toes and sometimes their feet and legs removed (Montour, Macaulay, and Adelson 1989). There is an aggressive campaign to educate the community on the perils of obesity and the importance of nutrition and exercise in order to prevent and control this condition (Potvin et al. 2003). Nonetheless, “bad carbs” have a great taste and take a traditional turn on Sundays, when it is common to make the savory, filling, sleep-inducing meal “cornbread and steak.” This is cornbread bathed in thick gravy, sometimes served with sausages as well as or in place of steak. Long before the Internet, you could find people reading the *New York Post* or the *New York Daily News* in restaurants, on porches. One woman used to ask me to bring her the *New York Times* from the city, and when I lived in Montreal, I brought it for her from “Multimags”<sup>9</sup> whenever I came home. Older women tend to wear their hair in tight, short perms, and speak in Mohawk; ironworkers retire, go home, and amble arthritically and from the looks painfully behind their wives. My earliest memories of Kahnawà:ke were of my own grandmother, the late Margaret K. Diabo (née Phillips) fixing people’s bones in her kitchen and switching back and forth from English and Mohawk with everyone who came into her home. She spoke this way with the man I call my grandfather, Eddie “Cantor” Diabo,<sup>10</sup> who switches back and forth from Mohawk to English to everyone, whether they are Indian or not. Most emphatically, it seems, when there is talk of the Boston Bruins or the border. Ten percent of the community now speaks Mohawk, but there is an aggressive campaign to educate everyone to speak the language. There is an adult immersion program with a graduating class of approximately fifteen to twenty people every year. There is a Catholic cemetery and a Protestant cemetery, and traditional people are buried according to Longhouse custom. There is also a pet cemetery. There are no addresses.

For those who are familiar with reserves, this sociological and historical sketch is both familiar and very different. There are no traplines mentioned; nor is there an emphasis or mention even of commodity cheese or of ex-orbitant poverty. There are institutions, professionals, the righteous. . . . There is a lot that goes unsaid. . . . There are those who drive “hummers” and gas guzzlers, Cadillacs, and Volkswagens; people who ride bikes or

jog; young mothers who walk with strollers; one man who pushes a cart with great purpose every day in warm weather. There are highways, paved roads, train tracks, two bridges that cut through and connect this community to every place, if you want. There is relentless discussion of how things should be, relentless critique and engagement about what some would call “politics,” of again, how things are, how they should be. There are unprompted, monologic “state of the nation” addresses. All of this exceeds the simplified figure of the ironworker. And yes, there are a lot of ironworkers there and, now, in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. But the story that I am telling in this book is of a place and people through time and their labor to live a good life and, in this, their imperative to live upon and move through their territory in the teeth of constraint—constraint of various forms but that we may gloss as settler colonialism. Although ironwork is a part of their story, one that we all seem to like and admire, other things I will talk and not talk about are less easy to like, such as refusal.

Like many other Iroquois people, the Mohawks of Kahnawà:ke refuse to walk on some beams, and through this gesture they refuse to be Canadian or American. They refuse the “gifts” of American and Canadian citizenship; they insist upon the integrity of Haudenosaunee governance. Moreover, some in this study answer only to that governmental authority. So the bestowal of settler citizenship has been received with a certain “awkwardness” if not outright refusal—a refusal to vote, to pay taxes, to stop *politically* being Iroquois. The language that this book uses to tell this story of refusal is the language that people use to talk about themselves. They speak in terms of nationhood, which stages a fundamental difficulty given that “Indigenous” and “nation” are two terms that seem incommensurable.<sup>11</sup> “Indigenous” is embedded conceptually in a geographic alterity and a radical past as the Other in the history of the West. Although seemingly unable to be both things at once, the Mohawks of Kahnawà:ke strive to articulate these modalities as they live and move within a territorial space that is overlaid with settler regimes that regulate or circumscribe their way of life. Their struggle with the state is manifest in their ongoing debate and discussion around a membership law within their community. This registers as a conflict and a crisis, as something eventful rather than structural. My argument is that it is a sign, also, of colonialism’s ongoing existence and simultaneous failure. Colonialism survives in a settler form. In this form, it fails at what it is supposed to do: eliminate Indigenous peo-

ple; take all their land; absorb them into a white, property-owning body politic. Kahnawà:ke's debates over membership index colonialism's life as well its failure and their own life through their grip on this failure.

When I started this work formally in 1996, much of the political energy of Kahnawà:ke was focused on the "question of membership." The criteria for political membership and formal recognition within their community remained contentious, as did the need and desire to come up with a formal code to define political rights independent of the Canadian state. A reservation, or reserve, consisted of 6,154 (on the band list) and 9,531 (on the Federal Registry list, or "roll").<sup>12</sup> Membership was then and still is considered deeply fundamental; it affords someone "the rights that matter": to live on the reserve, to vote if you want in band council or tribal elections, and to be buried on the reservation. Yet their diminished land base, the imposition of the Indian Act—*colonization*—has made this an issue, a divisive, lacerating one, within the community. The terms of this fundamental question are underscored by existential ones: Who are we? Who shall we be for the future? Who belongs here, and why do they belong here? The discussion of "membership"—the formation of a code—was (and still is) something over which nearly every community member agrees to disagree. Conversations are weighted by previous and ongoing miscarriages of justice, lacunae, misrecognitions, and animosities, and the list goes on.

Here, summarized, recalled, taken from notes, overheard, engaged in, processed, flipped back to—different moments from research, different moments abstracted from my own life as a part of this community<sup>13</sup>—are fragments taken from careening and breakneck moments of conversation:

"I know someone who is listed as 48 percent and the sister is 100 percent—they have the same parents . . ."

"What the hell happened there? . . ."

"I have no idea . . ."

"How can you be 48 percent Indian?"

"I have no idea."

"Why are we not going through the women?"

"We should go through the women."

"How is she on this list when she is white?"

"They were taken off the list because they are white."

"Who the hell is that?!"

"I don't know him—he is not from here!"

“I never heard of that person!”

“That man is full of shit!”

“I don’t know him”

“Who is your mother?”

“I saw your mother yesterday.”

Direct, pointed, fast: “Who are you?” There is always an answer with genealogic authority—“I am to you, this way . . .”; “this is my family, this is my mother, this is my father”; “thus, I am known to you this way”—which is sorted in those breakneck, fast, summarizing, and deeply important reckoning moments between people. The subtext seems to be “I want to know who you are. Tell me who you are. I will know who you are if you or someone else tells me who you are.” But is there a supratext? Why *wouldn’t* people know every single person they encounter in a reserve community of six thousand or more members? Because this is a space with entries and exits; it is not hermetic. People come and go and come back again. There have been legal impositions, and historically outsiders have acquired legal rights to reside there. More innocuously, there are visitors, friends from outside, friends from other reserves. Kahnawa’kehró:non are not always immediately discernible because of this;<sup>14</sup> the webs of kinship have to be made material through dialogue and discourse. The authority for this dialogue rests in knowledge of another’s family, whether the members are (entirely) from the community or not. “I know who you are.” *Pointe finale*. We are done; we can proceed. If you require more explanation, or cannot explain yourself, or be explained (or claimed) by others, then there is a problem.

“Membership talk” conditions such people as problems—unknowable, illegitimate—and also determines the conditions of belonging, the legitimacy of legal personhood outside of official or state law. Here the axis is in memory, in conversation, in sociality; by talking to other people you understand who someone is, how she is connected, and thus she is socially and affectively legitimized with or without official recognition. This knowledge archive, however, is structured through prior languages and experiences of exclusion and inclusion that are tethered, sometimes with venom, to historical processes: from the movement of Mohawk people in the seventeenth century from what is now New York State into their northern hunting territory, what is now southwestern Quebec (Canada). This moved Mohawks territorially into the first Catholic mission in the

Northeast, into an emergent reservation (the oldest in the Northeast), and into new sites of permanence and ongoing mobility.<sup>15</sup> The Indian Act of 1876, the overarching “law” of Indians in Canada, legally “made” and “un-made” Indians and their rights in a Western, specifically Victorian, model of patrilineal descent (and rule) that attempted to order their winnowed territories. This foreign authority and government has competed with and continues to compete with the life of Iroquois “tradition”—the ongoing philosophical system and governmental structure that connects them through clan and ceremony to other Haudenosaunee peoples.

These seemingly antagonistic processes of “tradition,” “modernity,” and “settlement” are what made forming an agreed-upon membership code in Kahnawà:ke deeply challenging, not to mention vexed, and biting. They open “the problem” of membership to much larger historical and political processes and questions—such as the context for rights, their meanings on the ground—quite simply, how to be a nation, when much of one’s territory has been taken. These processes also bring into question how to proceed as a nation if the right to determine the terms of legal belonging, a crucial component of sovereignty, has been dictated by a foreign government. The question emerges of how to do this—procedurally, ethically—if the certainty of its means are opaque or hidden and you are also viewed not as a people with a governmental system, a philosophical order, but as a remnant, a “culture,” a minority within an ethnocultural mosaic of differences. This speaks of settler manageability in biopolitical states of care, or abandonment on land reserved for your “use and benefit,” with regulations on how you use that land, who gets to use it, what the terms of that use are. This does not speak of sovereign political orders with authority over land and life. How can you proceed, then, under these conditions as if you are sovereign, as if you are a nation? Nationhood, one might think, hangs on the brink. But this story starts with a grounded refusal, not a precipice.

In this book I make three claims that are drawn from ethnographic research with the Mohawks of Kahnawà:ke. First, sovereignty may exist within sovereignty. One does not entirely negate the other, but they necessarily stand in terrific tension and pose serious jurisdictional and normative challenges to each other: Whose citizen are you? What authority do you answer to? One challenges the very legitimacy of the other. As Indigenous nations are enframed by settler states that call themselves nations and appear to have a monopoly on institutional and military power, this is

a significant assertion. There is more than one *political* show in town. If a Haudenosaunee person is to travel internationally, for example, on a Confederacy passport, then the very boundaries and lawfulness of the original territorial referent is called into question. The entire United States may then be “international,” which, some would argue, it was prior to contact and still is. Like Indigenous bodies, Indigenous sovereignties and Indigenous political orders prevail within and apart from settler governance. This form of “nested sovereignty” has implications for the sturdiness of nation-states over all, but especially for formulations of political membership as articulated and fought over within these nested sovereignties.

Second, there is a political alternative to “recognition,” the much sought-after and presumed “good” of multicultural politics. This alternative is “refusal,” and it is exercised by people within this book. They deploy it as a political and ethical stance that stands in stark contrast to the desire to have one’s distinctiveness as a culture, as a people, recognized. Refusal comes with the requirement of having one’s *political* sovereignty acknowledged and upheld, and raises the question of legitimacy for those who are usually in the position of recognizing: What is their authority to do so? Where does it come from? Who are they to do so? Those of us writing about these issues can also “refuse”; this is a distinct form of ethnographic refusal and is tied inextricably to my final claim.<sup>16</sup>

Third, the way that we come to know the politics and culture of “Indigenous” peoples requires an accounting that neither anthropology nor political science has done robustly.<sup>17</sup> One field of inquiry—anthropology—has dealt almost exclusively with Indigenous peoples in an ahistorical and depoliticized sense, innocent or dismissive of the strains of colonization and then settler colonialism on their politics, looking instead for pure culture and pure interlocutors of that culture.<sup>18</sup> Political science, government, and political theory are relatively new to questions of Indigenous politics and life and deal with them as a “case” that is wholly documentary or an ethical and practical test to the limits of Western norms of acknowledgment. Because of their Western, institutional, and statist focus, none of these disciplines have dealt evenhandedly, robustly, or *critically* with Indigenous politics and how they challenge what most perceive as settled. By “settled” I mean “done,” “finished,” “complete.” This is the presumption that the colonial project has been realized: land has been dispossessed; its owners have been eliminated or absorbed. This clean-slate settlement

is now considered a “nation of immigrants” (except the Indians). But this belief demonstrates a blindness to the structure of settler-colonial nation-statehood—of its labor, its pain, and its agonies—which get glossed and celebrated by the likes of US president Barack Obama as progressive acknowledgment of the exceptional status of Indigenous people.

These three claims force us to an argument about political form, positioning, and strategy. We see that rooted in the Iroquois case broadly—and Kahnawà:ke specifically—under the conditions of settler colonialism, multiple sovereignties cannot proliferate robustly or equally. The ongoing conditions of settler colonialism have forced Kahnawà'kehró:non to take an offensive position not just against the settler nation, but in some ways against themselves. This position then manifests in calculated refusals of the “gifts” of the state, and in vexed determinations of “membership” and belonging in that state. To understand this situation and perhaps move to a more productive place of refusal, we need to look at the history of this community within a larger matrix of relatedness (to territory, to other Iroquois peoples, to the politics that enframe them) and, in making these more robust forms of inquiry, change the ways we study and write about Indigenous politics.

In situations in which sovereignties are nested and embedded, one proliferates at the other's expense; the United States and Canada can only come into political being because of Indigenous dispossession. Under these conditions there cannot be two perfectly equal, robust sovereignties. Built into “sovereignty” is a jurisdictional dominion over territory, a notion of singular law, and singular authority (the king, the state, the band council, tribal council, and even the notion of the People). But this ongoing and structural project to acquire and maintain land, and to eliminate those on it, did not work completely. There are still Indians, some still know this, and some will defend what they have left. They will persist, robustly.

There has been and, we can infer, will continue to be push back on the settler logics of elimination. Those who still live this struggle with different political authorities find themselves in a “nested” form of sovereignty and in politics of refusal. Ethnography in such settings requires a historical and ethnologic accounting of why politics take this form. How is it that Indigenous people, and their politics, have come to be known in particular ways? These are politics that narrow to a point of irrational, unexplainable, seemingly illiberal expulsion and exclusion: “the problem of membership.”

### Signpost 1: Membership

On February 1, 2010, twenty-six non-Natives cohabitating with residents and members of Kahnawà:ke were issued eviction notices by the Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke (MCK), the council of elected officials that is authorized by the Indian Act, and thus Canada, to govern the community. They were told that they must leave the territory because as non-Indians residing in Kahnawà:ke without any form of recognition from the band council, they were living in contravention to the Kahnawà:ke Membership Law, enacted in 2003 and amended in 2007 and then in 2008.

Now, what kind of law would propose that couples be split up, that governance extend to love itself? What kind of law would seek to regulate the arrangement of families? All state law does this, but this particular one acknowledges the residue of the Indian Act, with its divisive, patrilineal bias, and attempts to correct it by making it unlawful for either a man or a woman to marry out, by being equally (some would say) discriminatory. The 2003 membership law was a gender-neutral, “heterosexed,”<sup>19</sup> discriminatory law that recognized only heterosexual marriages between status Indians, but offered “allowances” for the possibility of non-Native or unrecognized Indian individuals to marry “in” and reside legally on the reservation. The prior law only recognized heterosexual marriages between status Indians and those possessing Mohawk blood.

Here it is helpful to turn to Mark Rifkin’s (2010) book on the literary and anthropological history of sexuality and colonization, which demonstrates the complicity of ethnology, kinship rules, and literature with actual, settler governance. Essayists, fiction writers, and anthropologists imagined and imaged properties of personhood in their arrangements and representations of Indigenous life into discernible grids of governance and what Denise Ferreira da Silva (2007) calls “affectability” in her theory of racial formation. Affectability is the condition that makes some vulnerable to and, by the structuring reach of capital, entwined with racial logics of exclusion that condition inclusion in a Western, white racial order. This process, in Ferreira da Silva’s understanding, readies people for particular states of subjecting and being subjected to force and to law. The Kahnawà:ke Membership Law is that process, remade and reformed. It uses the governing impetus of settlement—“recognition”—to regulate, administer, and discipline the subject through a notion of band polity.

Consider here the first three paragraphs of the Preamble to the amended Kahnawà:ke Membership Law (2008):

We are the Kanien'kehá:ka of Kahnawà:ke. We are a community within the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation and the Rotinonhsónnión:we and as such are Indigenous Peoples who possess a fundamental and inherent right of self-determination given to us by the Creator.

As Indigenous Peoples, we have the right to maintain and promote our Kanien'kehá:ka identity including our culture, traditions, language, laws and customs.

As Indigenous Peoples, we have the collective right to determine our own membership. This right is fundamental to our survival.

We recognize that we have been harmed by foreign governments' attempts to undermine our will and ability to survive by dividing our community. We *reject* the imposition of the Indian Act and other foreign laws that have presumed to define the principles upon which the membership of our community will be determined. We *reject* all efforts to assimilate and extinguish our community under the guise of absolute individualism.

By enacting this Law we are fulfilling our responsibility to defend our community and our Nation from external threat, and in doing so are securing for future generations the right to survive and to continue living—proudly—as Kanien'kehá:ka of Kahnawà:ke.<sup>20</sup>

With this passage from the law we can see that this technique of governance is articulating a fear of disappearance through the very means that would disappear this nation: Canadian-authorized governance. This is expressed in the values of individual rights over “collective” rights—the ahistorical and presumed evenhandedness of liberalism to determine and render justice, in part, through presumed shared values of freedom, justice, equality, individualism, even distribution, and free trade. Yet these are the same values that Kahnawà:ke find intrusive and forcible. What is it from their political ethos and history that would make for such a paradoxical position?

Who are these people? Consider this in a descriptive register: “This is a reserve community of Indigenous nationals that belong to a larger pre-contact political Confederacy in what is now understood to be the Northeastern United States and Southeastern Canada.” They are known to themselves as Haudenosaunee, or “people of the Longhouse,” in refer-

ence to their traditional living arrangement of clan-based houses and their governing structure. This political confederacy is what is known in anthropological and everyday understanding as the “Iroquois Confederacy.” As a polity, the Mohawks of Kahnawà:ke are comprised of Turtle, Wolf, and Bear clans,<sup>21</sup> determined through matrilineal descent lines. They also then have a membership within a political corpus of the larger Longhouse, which spreads metaphorically across Iroquoia. This is a different descriptive window into the community at hand from that offered earlier, and one more in tune with the sensibilities of anthropologists of an earlier time.

Yet, the content of both descriptive accounts is what they, in part, will not let go of, or forget, or cease to enact: their relatedness to their place, to others, to a particular history, to their ongoing experiences because of this relatedness. These kin and reciprocal relationships extend throughout the fifteen other Iroquois reservations on either side of the border as well as the cities, suburbs, and nonreserve rural areas that Iroquois people move through and dwell within. Because of these spatial arrangements and spatial connections throughout Iroquoia, per settler colonialism’s past and present requirements, there are many severed connections that owe their severance to the Indian Act and its required geographic and gendered displacements. Joseph Mitchell’s “footloose” Indians have a deeper context than he will allow, or knew of.

As we saw above, membership talk is articulated through an archive of knowledge, identification, and beliefs about what is right, what *should* be done; its design and its execution both portend much for the present and for the future. “Who should be here? How should we do this?” “Is this fair?” are questions that instill an ongoing preoccupation, a set of normative questions that find no easy juridical answers. And yet, membership is simultaneously so simply explained as “this is how I am, to you.” This very simple, stop-the-clock mode of identification and claiming of others reaches even beyond recognition into a deeper archive of knowledge, drawing from sociality and genealogical and narrative relatedness. This archive of social and genealogical knowledge operates as an authorizing nexus of identification that also can and sometimes does refuse logics of the state. This is because formal recognition sometimes belongs to those *not* genealogically recognized: those who are non-Indian, married in, and obtained status (white women who married Indian men and now have Indian status) and those who have status and have never been to Kahnawà:ke

(these people are few and far between). The truly foreign, those who are somehow outside of the space of social and genealogical reckoning—the indecipherable—may be refused in spite of their formal recognition by the state.

Along with the ideas of “Indigenous” and “nationhood,” I use the Hegelian term “recognition” and its inverse, “misrecognition,” to tell this story. No matter how deeply Kahnawa’kehrón and other Indigenous nations understand themselves to be of their own philosophical systems and, simultaneously, no matter how deeply they understand the scene of their objectification as “Indians” or, even more ghastly, as “minoritized peoples,” they are rarely seen or then treated in the eye of the settler as that which they are and wish to be recognized as: nationals with sovereign authority over their lives and over their membership and living within their own space, which has been “held for them” in the form of reservations.

Although homelands of a sort, reservations owe their lives to state power; thus, the grounded fields of belonging, recognition, misrecognition, and refusal that I am mapping out are tied up with state power and its primary technique of distributing rights and protections: citizenship (Beiner 1995). As well as producing affectively structured citizens (Berlant 1997), the state produces the conditions for what I want to suggest are “distantiations,” “disaffiliations,” or outright refusals—a willful distancing from state-driven forms of recognition and sociability in favor of others. The genealogy for this is deep, but I will give a very cursory overview and condition this for settler-colonial settings. In the case of settler societies, there is an old Aristotelian problem of how to govern alterity, how to order it, how to make sense of that which is not yours—a question that is not normative but rather tactical, and it reemerges, violently. The ideal of transcendent principles, still divine and sometimes democratically inflected, animate the governance of these territories. Yet the problem of governance itself remains. This is because the category and construct (and institutional apparatus) of the nation-state and its presumed homogeneity endure in spite of their fundamental inability to be resolved with the complexity and force that animate the territorial histories and horizons of settler-colonial nation-states. Indigenous dispossession caused by settler emplacement exacerbates the problem of rule, of governance, and of legitimacy itself. In this, people got and still get moved about and they survive eliminations, but the state projects of political homogeneity and the ideal

correspondence of “ethnicity” and territorial boundaries remain irresolvable. The modern order itself is entwined with capital as this accumulative and acquisitive force further detaches people from places and moves them into other zones for productivity, accumulation, and territorial settlement.

This relationship is understood in part from literatures that have looked within presumably “postcolonial” or postrevolutionary/independent political orders to understand how nations come into being and how states emerge to manage that story of their beginnings and administer those populations. Thus, we have the importance in the literature on the iconic power of “nation” for governance. Within the literature on nationalism in anthropology, the state creates the image; this is Benedict Anderson’s “re-presentation” of the nation (1991). The mediated, printed sense of relatedness to others (those who one does not know intimately, personally) was achieved in Anderson’s account across vast territories because of communicable writing, because of newspaper. One would imagine now, in extending Anderson’s argument, that that relatedness may be further instantiated and redefined through the Internet, telecommunications, and the immense popularity of social networking sites on the web. This representational and communicative process of “we”-ness, of relatedness, was accelerated in the earlier literature by rituals of the state—national parades, coronations, museums, exhibits, and, most importantly in Anderson’s analysis, print media—all of which communicate in some way the essence of the nation, and who one’s relations were, sort of. In this literature that proliferated around Anderson, it was more than simply suggesting, through iconic imagery, who its people are; the state also had a crucial role in the classification and definition of those people through its monopoly over territorial boundaries. In this way, the state provided the inspiration for nationalism, as it possesses a monopoly on institutions of control and influence that may not cohere with those within these territories. If nationalism is generated under conditions of this disconnect between state institutions and histories of force, then what does consent do? Or how does consent matter?

The issue of consent drives to the centrality of the state in the location of settler-colonial power and bureaucratic largesse. Part of the energy of nationalism issues from the question of state authority and its legitimacy (Jusdanis 2001). Thus the literature on nationalism has difficulty *viewing* Indigeneity as possibly nationalist, and something able to be theorized.<sup>22</sup>

Rather, Indigeneity is imagined as something entrapped within the analytics of “minoritization,” a statistical model for the apprehension of (now) racialized populations “within” nation-states (Simpson 2011, 211). This is owing in part to the manner in which nationalism has been theorized, as something occurring within reified states in this formulation (and the formulations of Robert Foster, etc.), a reified state that is unresponsive and ahistorical.<sup>23</sup> Nationalism expresses a particular form of collective identity that embeds desire for sovereignty and justice. However, it does so only because of the deep impossibility of representation and consent within governance systems that are predicated upon dispossession and disavowal of the political histories that govern the populations now found within state regimes. When we add further nuance to this discussion within settler colonialist regimes, we have the problem of prior occupancy and ownership—Iroquois people with their own “constitution,” for example.

The primary way in which the state’s power is made real and personal, affective in its capacity, is through the granting of citizenship and, in this, the structural and legal preconditions for intimacy, forms of sociability, belongings, and affections (Berlant 1997). The bureaucratized state is one frame in which visibility is produced, creating the conditions under which difference becomes apparent; political aspirations are articulated; and culture, authenticity, and tradition (Verdery 1993, 42) become politically expedient resources. The state, in framing what is official, creates the conditions of affiliation or distance. These disaffiliations arise from the state’s project of *homogenizing heterogeneity*, “the construction of homogeneity out of the realities of heterogeneity that characterise all nation building” (R. Foster 1991, 249; B. Williams 1989, 429), which they have failed to do in the case of Kahnawà:ke Mohawks. It is this process of homogenizing that Kahnawà:ke’s own statelike apparatus of tribal governance (band council) also undertakes and that the community struggles with and against.

### Signpost 2: Detention and Recognition

On April 28, 2010, three Mohawks of Kahnawà:ke were detained in El Salvador for seventeen days. They were flying back from the International Climate Change Conference in Bolivia and were traveling on Haudenosaunee passports. They refused to allow Canada to issue them “emergency travel documents” (which amounts to a passport).<sup>24</sup> They waited instead

for ten more days, and they were permitted reentry into Canada via Iroquois Confederacy passports.

This detention is not an anomaly. Like the evictions described under the first signpost, this event is part of something larger, a set of assertions by Haudenosaunee peoples through time. They make these assertions based upon the validity and vitality of their own philosophical and governmental systems, systems that *predate* the advent of the settler state. Their arguments and actions regarding these systems, and the systems themselves, move discursively and materially into the face of the settler logic of dispossession and occupation. It is this same logic that informs Kahnawà:ke's reservation-based preoccupations and assertions regarding membership. Membership, passports, and evictions are of a piece with each other, as they all speak of a fear of disappearance but also from a form of sovereign authority: "I know you; I know who I am." "This is what I speak from, this treaty, this genealogic, this archive." "I refuse until you get it, or until I think you got it." Or, even, "I simply refuse."

In order to best give "refusal" as a political strategy its treads, it is helpful to turn directly to "colonialism" and to the work of Patrick Wolfe to contextualize the force that Kahnawà'kehró:non are up against. He argues that *settler* colonialism is defined by a territorial project—the accumulation of land—whose seemingly singular focus differentiates it from other forms of colonialism. Although the settler variety is acquisitive, unlike other colonialisms, it is not labor but territory that it seeks. Because "Indigenous" peoples are tied to the desired territories, they must be "eliminated"; in the settler-colonial model, "the settler never leaves" (1999, 2006). Their need for a permanent place to settle propels the process that Wolfe calls, starkly, "elimination."<sup>25</sup>

The desire for land produces "the problem" of the Indigenous life that is already living on that land. How, then, to manage that "Indian Problem," as it is known in American and Canadian administrative speak? Like the "Jewish Problem" posed by Jewish life and alterity, and now the "Palestinian Problem" posed by "overlapping claims" to territory, the "Indian Problem" is one of the existence of continued life (of any form) in the face of an acquisitional and territorial desire that then moves through time to become, in liberal parlance, the "problem" of difference. In the case of Indigeneity in North America, this became a question of what to do with their souls, their bodies, their culture, and their difference. Now the answer

appears to be for settler states to apologize or to recognize Indigenous peoples and the historical wrong that they experienced.

Recognition is the gentler form, perhaps, or the least corporeally violent way of managing Indians and their difference, a multicultural solution to the settlers' Indian problem. The desires and attendant practices of settlers get rerouted, or displaced, in liberal argumentation through the trick of toleration, of "recognition," the performance postconquest of "seeing people as they ought to be seen," as they see themselves—an impossible and also tricky beneficence that actually may extend forms of settlement through the language and practices of, at times, nearly impossible but seemingly democratic inclusion (Wolfe 2011, 32). This inclusion, or juridical form of recognition, is only performed, however, *if* the problem of cultural difference and alterity does not pose too appalling a challenge to norms of the settler society, norms that are revealed largely through law in the form of decisions over the sturdiness, vitality, and purity of the cultural alterity before it (Povinelli 2002, Markell 2003, Coulthard 2007). This fixation on cultural difference and its purity occludes Indigenous sovereignty. Looking for "culture" instead of sovereignty (and defining culture in particularly exclusionist, nineteenth-century ways) is a tricky move, as sovereignty has not in fact been eliminated. It resides in the consciousness of Indigenous peoples, in the treaties and agreements they entered into between themselves and others and is tied to practices that do not solely mean making baskets as your ancestors did a hundred years ago, or hunting with the precise instruments your great grandfather did 150 years ago, in the exact same spot he did as well, when witnessed and textualized by a white person. This book will demonstrate how sovereignty and nationhood are expressed differently from these essentialized modes of expectation by the settler state and its law, and how this difference pushes up against these other extremely narrow forms of judicial interpretation.

If regimes of recognition narrow to the juridical, then why do they persist? In part because they are seen as invariably virtuous. Although political recognition is a technique of settler governance, it appears as a transcendent and universal human desire that becomes a political antidote to historical wrongdoing. Thus, it would seem to salve the wounds of settler colonialism. Charles Taylor offers a foundational and empirically driven moral formulation<sup>26</sup> and defense of recognition for those whose difference is of such culturally determined form that they cannot help *but* be differ-

ent, and so must be recognized as having traditions that should be more than just “tolerated” (1994). The question of whether they should tolerate being tolerated, or tolerated in such a manner, does not arise for Taylor or others on his tail. However, “recognition” is a moral imperative, and, as Taylor argues, to be without it would cause harm—itsself intolerable. In this context, then, people are not only deserving of recognition (a “courtesy”), but it is, he argues, a “vital human need” (26).

Kahnawà:ke Mohawks are caught up in the history of wrongdoing and disavowal from which Taylor’s concerns speak. This is a historical attitude that supplants the ravages of settler colonialism with definitions of “difference.” Tolerance, recognition, and the specific technique that is multi-cultural policy are but an elaboration of an older sequence of attitudes toward “the problem” of difference on acquired, some might argue *seized*, territories. Here I am talking about a latter-day move to techniques that are used to manage “the problem” of Indigenous people, rendered now as populations, to be administered to by the state. This moves Indigenous peoples and their polities in the settler imaginary from nations, to people, to populations—categories that have shifted through time and in relation to land and its dispossession. Most important for this discussion, these categorical shifts set Indigenous peoples up for governmental regulation (Morgensen 2011, 62).<sup>27</sup> These techniques—occupying, treating, forceful elimination, containment, assimilation, the coterminous logics and practices and languages of race and civilization, the practice of immigration (called such in the United States and Canada, rather than “settlement”), the legal notion of natal right, and presumptions of just occupancy—all form the fulcrum of settlement’s labor (and its imaginary) as well as a whole host of other self-authorizing techniques and frameworks that *sustain* dispossession and occupation.<sup>28</sup>

It is in this imagined space of just settlement, of settler nationhood (and statehood), that the Iroquois assert the benchmarks of *Western* territorially based sovereignty discussed above: regulations over membership and jurisdictional authority over rights to residency; the issuing of Iroquois Confederacy passports; the insistence upon their validity according to prior agreements, prior recognitions; an insistence upon recognition and honorable relations *now* between nations. In these examples we see a prior recognition born from the political status of nationhood and an ongoing and unvanquished sovereignty. To assert this is to fundamentally inter-

rupt the sovereignty and the monocultural aspirations of nation-states, but especially those that are rooted in Indigenous dispossession. It is in the assertion of these rights (which are being diminished and narrowly interpreted, if not completely abrogated, in the courts)<sup>29</sup> that Iroquois peoples *remind* nation-states such as the United States (and Canada) that they possess this very history, and within that history and seized space, they possess a *precarious* assumption that their boundaries are permanent, uncontestable, and entrenched. They possess a precarious assumption about their own (just) origins. And by extension, they possess a precarious assumption about themselves.

The settler precariousness that I speak of structures the story that I am telling in this book, of Mohawk life, the labor of principle and sovereignty, labor that begins with refusal. That refusal is simply to disappear, a refusal to be on the other end of Patrick Wolfe's critical, comparative history—to be “eliminated.” In refusing to go away, to cease to be, in asserting something beyond difference, lies the position that requires one to “coexist” with others, with settlers, with “arrivants,” in the parlance of Jodi Byrd (2011)<sup>30</sup>—meaning the formerly enslaved or the indentured who did not voluntarily come to North America—and to live tacitly and taciturnly in a “settled state.” In this there is acceptance of the dispossession of your lands, of internalizing and believing the things that have been taught about you to you: that you are a savage, that your language is incoherent, that you are less than white people, not quite up to par, that you are then “different,” with a different culture that is defined by others and will be accorded a protected space of legal recognition *if* your group evidences that “difference” in terms that are sufficient to the settlers' legal eye. To accept these conditions is an impossible project for some Indigenous people, not because it is impossible to achieve, but because it is politically untenable and thus normatively should be refused.

Contorting oneself in a fundamental space of misrecognition is not just about subject formation; it is about historical formation. And by refusing to agree to these terms and to be eliminated Mohawks are asserting *actual* histories and thus legislating interpretive possibilities in contestation—interpretations of treaty, possibilities of movement, electoral practices—not only individual *selves*. These are contesting systems of legitimacy and acknowledgment. The events of refusal we have seen in this introduction *enunciate*, in Pierre Bourdieu's sense, several processes. Most evident

among these processes and accounts is their ability to signal Indigeneity and couple it with sovereignty. These stories of evictions, of Confederacy-issued passports, demonstrate Indigeneities comingling with sovereignty and their seemingly anomalous but insistent relation.

What does it mean to be unrecognized? What does it mean to not know what this means? These are fundamentally political questions, and thus require that I ask what it means to be recognized. Political recognition is, in its simplest terms, to be seen by another *as one wants to be seen*. Yet this regard is not merely for the sanctity of the self; it is to appear politically in formal and official forms, to have rights that protect you from harm, that provide you access to resources, or that protect certain resources. Patchen Markell describes this succinctly as, in its base form, “who we take ourselves and others to be” (2003, 1). One might specify this as “to have rights, to have an effectual capacity within a regime of power,” as one should. This then means to have the recognition of the state and to have a passport that allows you as a formal member of the community to move, to travel, to receive, and exercise protections from harm. To be misrecognized, Markell also helpfully states in his discussion of the literature, is cast as a miscarriage of justice, a “failure whether out of malice or ignorance, to extend people the respect or esteem that is due to them in virtue of who they are” (2003, 2). To then be unrecognized would mean literally to be free from recognition and thus operate as a free-floating signifier, with politically unformed or unprotected identities—most important, as identities that are vulnerable to harm.<sup>31</sup> Here I want to argue that it is impossible to be free from an authorizing context, which means one is a slave, in some readings of Friedrich Hegel, and remains so until recognized in a system of mutuality (“I see you; you see me; this is reciprocal; this reciprocity signals justice”). We might, however, want to test this reading further through empiricism. Indigeneity and its imbrication with settler colonialism question the conditions of seeing (perhaps of writing) that are laid out in the master-bondsman allegory; this allows us to consider another vantage point in another perceptual and argumentative theater or space of recognition. Settler colonialism structures justice and injustice in particular ways, not through the conferral of recognition of the enslaved but by the conferral of disappearance in subject. This is *not seeing* that is so profound that mutuality cannot be achieved. “Recognition” in either a cognitive or juridical sense is impossible. It simply would

require too much contortion from one protagonist and not the other to be considered just.

In order to further our understanding of the Iroquois case, I want to move the discussion to the theater of apprehension—the way in which we see and understand this scene of “recognition”/“nonrecognition”—into the materiality of current settler nation-states. This is a theater that is more than a neutral and performative dramaturgy; it is in fact a settler-colonial nation-state with particular optics, expectations, and possibilities for interpretation. Hegel’s is a concern with the *position* of the slave, not the slave himself; that subjectivity is taken up by others. Frantz Fanon most forcefully argues in *Black Skin: White Masks* (1967) that the slave is the black man, and in this subjectifying allegory the black man comprehends the scene as one of objectification, and in this, the feeling of subjugation and the deep knowledge of its context. The black man sees an economy that is predicated upon the extraction of labor from specified bodies in order to annex territories and fuel the accumulation of surplus.<sup>32</sup> Recognition, in this reading of Hegel, is the basis for self-consciousness, and here taken to be a political self-consciousness that will translate into a revolutionary argument, a movement to unshackle oneself from this formula for self-perception. Glen Coulthard (2007) takes from Fanon’s reading of Hegel the impetus to “turn away” from the oppressor, to avert one’s gaze and refuse the recognition itself.<sup>33</sup> This moment of turning away can turn us toward Haudenosaunee assertions, which in different ways tell a story about a territory of willingness, a willingness to “stay enslaved.” We could see this as a political strategy that is cognizant of an unequal relationship, understands the terms of bondage, and chooses to stay within them in order to assert a greater principle: nationhood, sovereignty, jurisdiction by those who are deemed to *lack* that power, a power that is rooted in historical precedent but is conveniently forgotten or legislated away.<sup>34</sup> Perhaps here we see a willingness to assert a greater principle and, in the assertion of this principle, to assert and be free whether this is apprehended as such or not. So in the Haudenosaunee political context it can mean recognition by another authoritative nexus (one’s own?) and thereby call the other’s into question. This negates the authority of the other’s gaze.

### Signpost 3: Refusing to Play the Game

On July 17, 2010, the Iroquois Nationals Lacrosse Team (INLT) “bowed out” of the World Lacrosse League Championship tournament in Manchester, England.<sup>35</sup> They did so because the United Kingdom refused to recognize the Haudenosaunee passport as secure and therefore legitimate. Their passports were signed and issued by the chiefs of the Iroquois Confederacy, a governance structure that predates the United States and the United Kingdom by at least three hundred years. The INLT had used this type of passport to travel to international competitions for the past thirty years. Numerous newspapers also reported that the Iroquois were the “creators of the very sport” they were to compete in.<sup>36</sup>

We could read this as a refusal to play the game of being American or Canadian, which for the lacrosse players would mean forgetting or abandoning the deep history, philosophy, and authority of Iroquois governance. This discourse of being and of *staying* Mohawk is articulated to notions of an Iroquois past, but also to the desire to stay distinct from nation-states, or states that are like nations (Canada, Quebec,<sup>37</sup> and, at times, the United States). These are states that are relatively new, that follow from distinctively colonial encounters, and are undertaking their own processes of self-fashioning. Patricia Seed argues in her book on the processes of colonization of the New World that this earlier acquisitional effort reads like a “pentimento,” a watery imprint of earlier colonizing projects that surfaces on the texts that we inherit today (2001, 1–11). As such, for a particular colonial state, one possessing such spectacular power of self-definition and moral turpitude that it can define itself as a revolutionary (postcolonial) and simultaneously immigrant state—one that is innocent of the violence and dispossession that got it to its apparent point of newness—there is a need for an aggressive regulatory fixation on demarcating, through time, the boundaries and the content of the “we” of community. The move to administrative power and will is great, as these populations are to be tended to and also harmonized into a form of constructed, rights-bearing kin through citizenship.

In settler societies such as the United States and Canada, citizenship is key to this process of rationalizing dispossession and the rapid ascent of power for migrants; so, citizenship is also key to Kahnawà:ke’s enunciation of self under conditions in which they would have to disappear. This issue

of disappearance—and more particularly, *not* disappearing—has presented Kahnawa'kehró:non with a central problem: how to imagine themselves outside of the interstices of Empire while operating within it. They have to, because Empire is both everywhere and nowhere, ahistorical and endlessly performing a fast past; it is a place with a state, with imperatives, and with administrative power on top of Kahnawà:ke land. A turn to one of their own thinkers, the late Louis Karoniaktajeh Hall,<sup>38</sup> on just this question may help us to understand how Kahnawa'kehró:non approach questions of governance and the state. His is an approach and a position that many other Kahnawa'kehró:non take, and it informs the more militant stances on land expropriation that we will read about in this book. This position speaks from the particular interpretation of “tradition” within Kahnawà:ke as differentiated from other Confederacy reservations, which has made for a less conciliatory form of politics in dealing with settler occupation—an act of turning away, less willingness to “play the game.”

For the white race the nation is a recent concept. When the red and white races met, all the countries in Europe were kingdoms. In a kingdom, only the monarch has sovereignty. Everything and everyone belonged to the king. A true nation is where the authority flows upward from the people to the installed leaders, as in the case of the Six Nations “Iroquois” Confederacy, also known as the LongHouse [*sic*], world's first people's republic and the first to make a national constitution, a State far head [*sic*] of any then known. (Hall n.d.: 33)

For Hall, political authority vested in the people, in their past, and the past's aggressive articulation with the present.<sup>39</sup> Louis Hall's two influential pamphlets, *Rebuilding the Iroquois Confederacy* (n.d.) and the *Warrior's Handbook* (1979), evidence a critical, very non-Seneca (the ethnological core of Iroquois culture studies in anthropology), and decidedly anti-Handsoma Lake (the dominant form of tradition in the literature) position for Iroquois people. His work deserves consideration for its critique of monarchical forms of sovereignty, for its position against the history of the Iroquois written by both outsiders and Iroquois themselves, and for the influence it wielded in communities such as Kahnawà:ke, Kanehsatà:ke, Ahkwesáhsne, and Tuscarora in reinterpreting and revitalizing more militant elements of traditional Iroquois politics and culture. Within the discursive tradition of writing on the Iroquois, which I detail in chapter 3,

Hall's thinking and writing is also important for its centering of the Kanien'kehá:ka, or Mohawk, as a clear cultural and political articulation of critique vis-à-vis monarchical and even traditional forms of power, for its remarkable hagiography of Handsome Lake, and for its historiography of the Confederacy itself. Hall engages with the notion of nationhood as both a traditional and contemporary form of political organization that is especially attractive to the Kanien'kehá:ka. Nationhood is a construct, in the *Warrior's Handbook*, that is a cultural and political "right" and a "good," and a matter of principle rather than procedure. This principled approach to tradition and culture is manifest most succinctly in his "Mohawk Ten Commandments." Quoted directly from the text:

1. BE BRAVE AND FEARLESS, as there can be no peace on earth for those who are in fear.

2. BE STRONG. In this hard cruel world, only the strong may know peace and happiness. To be weak is to invite aggression, oppression, tyranny, misery, and woe.

3. FIGHT FOR YOUR RIGHTS, for only those who fight for it can achieve human rights and respect. There is a right and wrong way to fight. Always propose to fight in a clever way, for he who fights in a clever way is equal to a thousand men.

4. MAINTAIN A STRONG NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE AND SOVEREIGNTY UNDER THE GREAT LAW OF PEACE—GAYANEREKOWA and let your slogan be PEACE, RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND POWER, for not one of these is possible without the other two. Let no power abolish your nation.

5. MAINTAIN YOUR OWN NATIONAL INITIATIVE and let no other nation control your destiny. Respect Nature's first law of SELF-PRESERVATION AND STOP TRAITOR [*sic*] SEEKING TO DESTROY YOU AND YOUR PEOPLE, for any nation which ignores this law stands condemned to extinction.

6. DEVELOP THE SPIRIT OF COOPERATION so that your nation can rely completely on its own efforts. To become a competitive state is to create tensions, strife, panic, frenzy, fear, hate, bigotry, weakness, and divisions.

7. THINK RIGHT SO THAT YOU SHALL DO RIGHT AND BE RIGHT, for only the purely justice minded can achieve peace and happiness for all.

8. RESPECT THE RIGHTS OF OTHERS so that your own rights may be respected, and these rights include the right to live and be free; the right to a nationality, territory, government, possessions, and freedom of speech, to

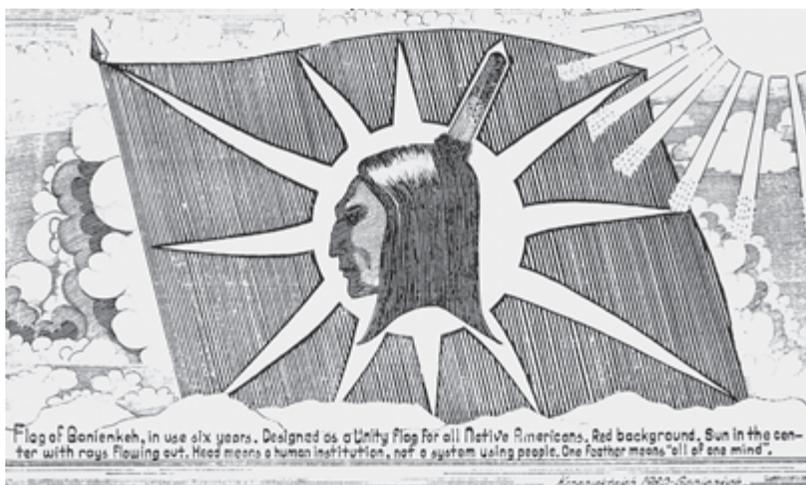
think and believe as one sees fit, to human rights and to the pursuit of peace and happiness.

9. ACQUIRE WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORLD, FOR ONLY THROUGH UNDERSTANDING AMONG ALL PEOPLE WILL MISUNDERSTANDING AND WAR BE ELIMINATED. Let there be a special course of study on the subject of devising a proper moral government and let proper people be trained to operate this very important device to ensure the peace and happiness of mankind; and let a study be included to produce a most worthy economic system to eliminate poverty, misery, and wretchedness. Let only those who pass a most rigid test on the subjects of government and economic knowledge be allowed to run governments and nations.

10. ACQUIRE ADVANCED HUMAN RELATIONSHIP. Human birth is an act of Nature, and all humanity is equally subject to Nature's law of death. No one has the right of lordship over others. The more able only have the right to help those less able; the appointed leaders of governments only have the right to be the voice and will of the people that all may share in the bounties of Nature and know peace and happiness. (Hall 1979: 3–4)

Identifying Gayanerekowa<sup>40</sup> as the correct form of governance, Hall invokes traditional governance and philosophy as the just way of living, but then suggests an unusual dynamism and elasticity in that form when he calls for the development of a moral government as a *course of study* and uses the language of achievement ( “let only those that pass a most rigid test on the subjects of government . . . be allowed to run governments and nations” for leadership). Perhaps most critically, in stating “No one has the right of lordship over others,” he throws a direct jab at the hereditary chiefs of the Iroquois Confederacy and the hereditary process itself.

In Louis Hall's work, the Gayanerekowa is treated as a just and desirable model for governance, but one that may be revised and transformed according to its own democratic principles, rather than procedure. In the writing on the Iroquois (see especially Morgan, Beauchamp, and Shimony), the procedure becomes the principle; and in Kahnawà:ke, or rather, in Louis Hall's formulations, the principle *shall become* the procedure. Note the language of “shall” and “become”: these formulations are both normative and future oriented and are premised upon the belief that the past shall be made dynamic by the demands of the present and the hopes of the future.



**Fig 1.1** Warrior Flag with explanatory note by Louis Hall. Image courtesy of the 207 Longhouse.

Louis Hall is a critical voice in a Mohawk nation-building project, but for reasons that will become clear in chapter 3, it is marginal in the larger picture of Iroquois tradition and certainly in the textual project that is understood as “Iroquois studies,” where his writing and artwork receive no attention whatsoever.<sup>41</sup> His work graces the cover of the now out-of-print ethnography *Sovereignty and Symbol* (Landsman 1988), but his teachings and writings have yet to receive scholarly attention.

I do not wish to suggest that I will be able to treat his work with the manuscript-length attention it deserves. I do want to discuss his writing as important for the effect it had on Kahnawà:kehró:non; it has a critical stance on matters that are both Iroquoian and very specific to Kahnawà:ke and yet has serious implications for the ways in which Indigeneity is written and thought about. Despite that his writings are outside of the authoritative domain of the Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke, and outside of the larger Confederacy Councils (at Six Nations and Onondaga), they are also absolutely caught up with questions of governance.

Hall is remarkable for thinking beyond the boundaries of the community. His interpretations present antipietistic critiques of the “new religion” of Handsome Lake—the religion and normative order that has governed Iroquois tradition in almost every community except Kahnawà:ke, Ahkwesàhsne, Kanehsatà:ke, and Tuscarora. Hall’s critique and the position it



Fig 1.2 Warrior society defined by Louis Hall. Image courtesy of the 207 Longhouse.

articulates differentiate Kahnawà:ke traditionalism, or one iteration of it. Outsiders would associate his work and thinking with the “207 Longhouse” and the militant Warrior society by outsiders, although his work circulated more broadly than that (Horn-Miller 2003; see also Alfred 2005) and his critique of the proceduralism of the Confederacy may place him in a space perhaps of *excess* in the vein of Jacques Derrida, though it is an excess that refuses to sit still or stay put even in its state of difference between what it gestures for, what it hopes to signify: tradition. In this respect, Hall is speaking out of turn and he has no idea that he is outrageous. He *sounds* like a statesman, or maybe a pope, or maybe a democrat, and this is most important: he appears not to care that his ideas may be both marginal to

the dominant ways of conceptualizing Iroquois tradition, history, or governance and yet be “familiar” to a Western, democratically tuned ear. He exceeds that with which he gestures. And he misses at times; but productively, I think. This excess lies, then, in a sign of nation. In this, he gestures before settler and state power itself, calling up traditional orthodoxy in Iroquoia, while installing himself to recruit for his mission of enlightened militancy, reformed living, and critical, democratically inflected *tradition*.

He is something like a metonym for Kahnawà:ke itself, the first reservation north of the United States–Mexico border, a reservation that predates Indian removals in the states, the “official” Indian wars, the Métis rebellion, and almost every formalized engagement with settlers that is deemed significant in Indigenous histories north of Mexico.<sup>42</sup> Founded in 1620 by Mohawks who moved out of the Mohawk Valley in what is now New York State, the families moved to the northernmost parts of their hunting territory and then three times up the St. Lawrence River until the first Longhouses were built in 1680, in what is now Kahnawà:ke. Like Louis Hall, Kahnawà:ke is deeply of and distanced from what is considered center. The largest concentration of speakers are there (10 percent of the community speak Mohawk, the highest concentration of Mohawk language speakers (and possibly any Iroquoian language in any Iroquois community), and yet Kahnawà:ke is considered “away from” the center of things—Tonawanda, Onondaga (where the central fire of the Confederacy was before the American Revolution), and the multinational Six Nations (population 23,294),<sup>43</sup> situated next to the white town of Brantford, Ontario. Kahnawà:ke is like the fringe on a boot of the Confederacy, a paradoxical version of the ideal type found in the literature and in traditional rhetoric. It is imperfect in ethnological terms, but definitely traditional; peace loving, but definitely ready to use force (consistently in defense of rights and of territory); deeply “matriarchal,” but juridically disenfranchising of women.<sup>44</sup> The categories that are used to understand them, and to govern them, come apart when we try to “place” the community perfectly within a sociological grid of Iroquois or Indigenous ethnological categories. This is because of their assertiveness, their refusal to stay in an ethnological grid of apprehension and governance (Rifkin 2010), their aspirations to something else. This defiance of categorization causes them to stretch beyond and perhaps destroy what is a pre-given anthropological matrix, simply: “Iroquoian language group.”

As a community of clans that formed a precontact nation, one that was recognized by other Confederacy nations,<sup>45</sup> and then by the political regimes of the Dutch, the English, and the French—and in their earliest stages, the United States and Canada—Kahnawà:ke has a serious investment in and memory of the history of political recognition in the Northeast. The people of Kahnawà:ke carry this history with them through their use and rendering of Iroquois governance and treaty. The Kaianere’kó:wa, “the Great Law of Peace” is brought to life through invocation; the normative limits to their relationships to outside communities imagined through references to the Kaswentha, “the Two Row Wampum”; and their passage into other nations and states rendered possible by the Jay Treaty of 1794, signed between Britain and the United States. In emphasizing these historical, mnemonic, and legal rights in the present day, they carry the historical and *intended* meanings of these forms of recognition with them in their day-to-day lives. For example:

The parties to the Silver Covenant Chain agreed to come together regularly to polish the chain so as to restore their original friendship. They also promised to pass the treaty down from generation to generation so that its intent would never be forgotten. The Mohawks of Kahnawà:ke have carried the idea of the Two Row and the Covenant Chain through history and use it to guide them in their contemporary relationships. Most Canadians however, are unaware of the nature, intent and purpose of the peaceful and co-operative relationship that was originally formed and agreed to by their predecessors.

The Mohawks of Kahnawà:ke honor the legacy left by their ancestors and will continue to advocate renewing the historic relationship with Canada based on the respect and recognition of the principles embodied within the Two Row Wampum.<sup>46</sup>

The diplomatic history that the people of Kahnawà:ke share with other Iroquois nations and the residue of these encounters are material that rendered them recognizable and important in moments of encounter with other Iroquois nations, with settler peoples, with other Indian communities and nations, and then with the political regimes of the United States and Canada. This historical consciousness is, as the above quote attests, very alive in the present and forms much of, for example, Louis Hall’s discourse. However, the historical recognition that the Iroquois enjoyed

in the past now shifts through the legal, disciplining registers of political discourse and categorization within colonial regimes. In this respect, the people of Kahnawà:ke are status Indians and thus “wards of the state,” or what some may view as partial citizens, or “citizens plus.”<sup>47</sup> They have the legal status only, it seems, of protected peoples, but it is this status that they use to protect and entrench their semiotic and material resources in light of state encroachment and then refuse forms of recognition if they so choose. It is at this point that this book begins.

### **Cartography of Refusal**

*Mohawk Interruptions*, then, is a cartography of refusal, one that takes shape in the invocation of the prior experience of sovereignty and nationhood, and their labor in the present. In this first chapter we have seen the constraints to the phenomenon at hand, of people thinking and acting as nationals in a scene of dispossession. The book now moves through the empirical case of Kahnawa'kehró:non, or Kahnawà:ke (the place, but more the people of that place, wherever they may be), to demonstrate the fundamentally interrupted *and* interruptive capacity of that life within settler society. Their political consciousness and actions upend the perception that colonization, elimination, and settlement are situations of the past. Kahnawa'kehró:non are not settled; they are not done; they are not gone. They have not let go of themselves or their traditions, and they subvert this requirement at every turn with their actions. Their struggles with and against a membership policy, their own regime of recognition, is a symptom of the continued colonial requirement that they disappear and a symptom, I would say, of colonialism's ongoing life and simultaneous failure.

An important part of understanding Kahnawà:ke's contemporary struggles is acknowledging how it has been constructed in the ethnological and anthropological literature on the Iroquois. This may seem an odd route to go; for those readers invested in questions and literatures of contemporary politics, ethnology would not be the go-to domain for an analysis of the political in settler states. However, as one will read in subsequent chapters, anthropology has very much been the domain of defining the political for Indigenous peoples historically, and in fact was the mode for constructing and defining Indigeneity itself. In the case of Kahnawà:ke, this mode of apprehension has mapped out in ways that have been particularly judg-

mental, authenticating, or disauthenticating—ultimately, *adjudicating*—all with the intent of upholding the law and the filter of comprehension: hierarchically arranged ethnological categories. In chapter 2, I specifically lay out the course of modern history for Kahnawà:kehrónon with attention to territory so that their struggles with and against contemporary settler states are clear and they can move out of the ethnographic frame of failure. As the politics of this community are still entangled in some ways with these conceptual filters of linguistics, ethnology, ritual—as anything they do is read against these adjudicating, authenticating frames of analysis—the territorial and experiential history that produces them in particular ways has to be laid out so that the filters that misapprehended them can be revealed and narrated as well. Chapter 3 moves from that territorial history to an anthropological history of writing that contains and constrains Iroquois politics into certain geographic spaces and versions of tradition, explaining how the desire for fetishized cultural purity could not be met at Kahnawà:ke. In chapter 4, I move from that atrophied scene of a purist “canon” of knowledge into the space of what it necessarily excludes: the community and the people in question and the centrality of ethics when researching and writing in this historical, conceptual, and political context. I refuse to practice the type of ethnography that claims to tell the whole story and have all the answers. This is not an even playing ground for interpretation, and I do not pretend otherwise. I call this heightened awareness my “ethnographic refusal.” In chapter 5 we see contemporary ethnographic engagements with the United States–Canada border contextualized in the legal history, particularly the Jay Treaty of 1794 that Mohawks work from when they cross. As such the chapter moves us to contemporary representations of Iroquois politics, how those politics and the people they impact move across the border, and the subsequent vilification and criminalization of them by the Canadian press. Chapter 6 analyzes the so-called Oka Crisis of 1990, when Mohawks took up arms against the expansion of a nine-hole golf course into their territory, and how this crisis links to the membership debate in Kahnawà:ke. I argue that these are both symptoms of the ongoing, gendered violence against land and Indian women perpetrated by and as a result of settler colonialism. As such these supposed “events” and “crises” are of a piece with each other. Ethnographic vignettes and interviews on membership and citizenship entwine through this chapter to demonstrate the different ways in which people think about

and push back on the expectations that they disappear—as women, as Indians, as people tied to land. Through these ethnographic engagements we also see that citizenship, instantiated in different ways, is a living form of claiming, of being claimed, and of feeling within the polity, rather than an act of government conferral.

Kahnawà:ke and its people are unique within the landscape not only of anthropology, Native and Indigenous studies, and the specificity of Iroquois studies, but also of most political studies. This unique positioning owes to the history of anthropology, the particular culture base of the community, and the settler history of Canada (and the United States), all of which contribute to the reading of Kahnawà:ke as improperly Iroquois or impossibly nationalist (since they are Indigenous and thus non-Western). This oversight has much to do with the conventional foci of both anthropology (the traditional domain of Native American studies) and political science (the traditional domain of nationalism studies), and there are theoretical and methodological reasons for these omissions. Neither discipline has harnessed the conceptual tools to engage the possibility of Indigenous nationhood; nor could they do it in ways that were consistent with the words and actions of the subjects. Neither has seemed to take seriously either the claims that settler colonialism places on subjectivities, or the politics of peoples in these geopolitical spaces.<sup>48</sup> The attention that has been paid to colonialism as a situation of “elsewhere” and “before” has left the politics of “the nations within” North America largely unexamined and undertheorized. This book will attempt to reverse that trend.