Université de Montréal

Who Do *You* Think You Are?

Mixed Identity and Cultural Transmission: Narratives of Mixed-Blood Women from a First Nations Community

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Résumé

Ce mémoire de maîtrise porte sur l'implication de la « loi sur le membership et le droit de résidence à Kahnawà:ke » sur six femmes mixtes Mohawks de la communauté Mohawk de Kahnawà:ke. Nous utilisons une méthodologie de recherche qualitative pour analyser les récits de vie des participantes et leurs expériences en tant que personnes ayant un héritage culturel mixte. Dans ce contexte, nous explorons certains facteurs qui ont facilité ou atténué leur identité culturelle et leur sentiment d'appartenance. Nous explorons aussi la question de la transmission culturelle à la prochaine génération. Les résultats de cette étude suggèrent que l'identité culturelle et les modes de vie Mohawk sont transmis de manière intergénérationnelle dans les familles des participantes. Dans cette étude, les femmes font des efforts tenaces pour se réapproprier leur culture et de créer un sentiment d'appartenance qui leur est propre. Ces récits détaillés des participantes s'ajoutent à la recherche canadienne sur l'identité mixte et la transmission culturelle dans un contexte autochtone.

Mots-clés: Identité, Appartenance, Transmission culturelle, Mixte-Autochtone, Mohawk, Kahnawake, Premières Nations.

Abstract

In this master's thesis, I examine the implications of the Kahnawà:ke membership and residency law on six mixed-blood women from the Kahnawà:ke Mohawk community. With the use of qualitative research methodology, I analyze the participants' narratives of their experiences with growing up racially mixed. In this context, I explore some of the factors that facilitated or mitigated their sense of cultural identity and belonging. I also explore the question of cultural transmission to the future generation. The findings from this study suggest that Mohawk cultural identity and ways of life are perpetuated intergenerationally in these women's' families. The participants make tenacious efforts to re-appropriate their culture and find ways to create their space of belonging. These participants' detailed accounts add to the Canadian body of research on mixed-race identity and cultural transmission in an Indigenous context.

Keywords: Identity, Belonging, Transmission of culture, Mixed-Indigenous, Mohawk, Kahnawake, First Nations.

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Definitions of Terms

Aboriginal. The term Aboriginal refers to "those persons who belong to an Aboriginal group, that is, First Nations, Métis or Inuit." (Statistics Canada)

First Nations People. The term "First Nations people" refers to "status and non-status "Indian" peoples in Canada. Mohawks from Kahnawà:ke are "First Nations People." (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada)

Status Indian or Registered Indian. The Indian Act defines a Status Indian as "a person who, pursuant to this Act, is registered as an Indian or is entitled to be registered as an Indian. The federal government maintains an official list of Status Indians called the Indian Register. Status Indians are entitled to certain rights and benefits under the law." (Statistics Canada) Métis and Inuit people are not eligible for Indian Status.

Reserve. The term reserve is used to describe the "act of land, the legal title to which is held by the Crown, set apart for the use and benefit of an Indian band." (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada)

Indian Band. The term refers to a First Nations government. For example, The Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke (MCK) is the elected governing body in the Mohawk territory of Kahnawà:ke. It comprises of 12 representatives elected by the community. (Mohawk Council Kahnawà:ke website)

To the *mixed* kids

Ashamed of my race?
And of what race am I?
I am many in one.
Through my veins there flows the blood of
Red Man, Black man, Breton, Celt and Scot.
In worrying clash and tumultuous riot
I welcome all…

(Excerpt from the poem "The Mulatto to His Critics" by Joseph S. Cotter, Jr.)

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INTRODUCTION, PURPOSE OF THE STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Mixed: Mongrel, Half-breed, Half-caste, Half-pure, Mutt, Coolie, Mestizo, Hybrid, Métis, Mulatto, Multiracial, and Bi-racial. These are some of the terms used across centuries to describe people born from a mixed ethnic or racial parentage. Heavily pathologized by pseudo-scientific and eugenic discourses and frequently described as a socially marginalized group in the literature throughout history, mixed-race people are now one of the fastest growing populations in the US, UK, and Canada (Choudry, 2010; Aspinall & Song, 2013). More than ever before, there seems to be a growing fascination for understanding the experiences of mixed-race children. Academics in the US and the UK have been leaders in the field of mixed-race studies. However, American and British studies have primarily focused on issues relating to black-white and Asian-white mixed-race couples and their children. In the US, The Civil Rights movement, as well as the removal of the law against interracial unions and marriages in 1967, resulted in an era coined the "bi-racial baby boom", a significant increase of children born from mixed black-white unions in the 1980s (Root, 1992). As such, this cohort of black and white mixed-race couples and their children are a rich ground for social scientists in the US, and they seem to have been the default group to study ever since.

In comparison, mixed-race issues have been greatly understudied by academics in Canada. Minelle Mahtani, who is considered by many to be the "key figure in critical mixed race studies" (Paragg, 2015) in Canada, posits that given our different racial pasts, "we cannot assume that the contributions from American and British scholars will provide the intellectual architecture required to understand the Canadian experience of multiraciality" (Mahtani, 2014, p. 31). Notably, the experiences of mixed-blood Indigenous people of Canada have been overlooked in Canadian academia. Crystal Rattai (2014), who completed a masters' thesis at Mcgill University on the topic of urban mixed-blood Aboriginal people in Manitoba, states that "the stories of mixed-blood Aboriginal people have been lacking in representation, voice, and little weight has been given to their significance in the academy and scholarly work to date" (p. 32). Rattai (2014) offers suggestions for future research, one being that the effects of the ban on mixed couples living together in the Mohawk reserve of Kahnawà:ke be looked into. Rattai asks: "How is the current situation at the Kahnawà:ke Mohawk Territory going to

affect the woman who 'marry out' and are evicted from their homes? What about the children? How is 'marrying out' handled on other reserves across Canada? Does this remain an issue for Native women and children?" (p. 120). Rattai's questioning illustrates that the situation for mixed-blood couples and their children from Kahnawà:ke is a topical issue. It has yet to be examined in depth and needs further academic investigation, which is what I propose to do in this thesis.

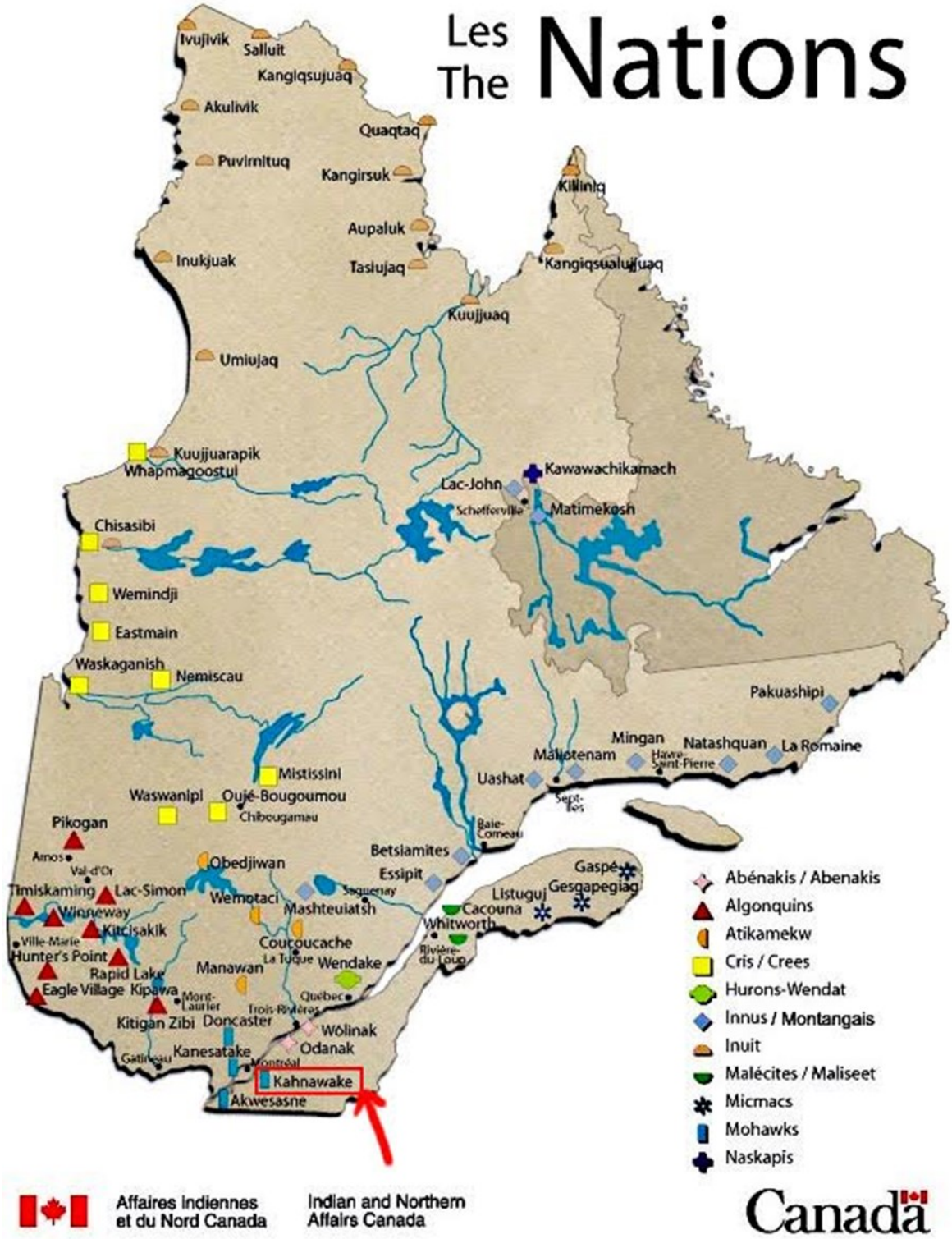
Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The following study aims to add to the body of knowledge on mixed-blood Indigenous identity in Canada by addressing the voices of women of mixed parentage from a First Nations community, the Mohawk reserve of Kahnawà:ke, located 10 kilometres south of Montreal, Quebec (see figure 1 below). The objective is to better understand their identity choices and experiences of growing up racially mixed. I am also interested in understanding if and how Mohawk culture and ways of life are perpetuated in Mixed-Mohawk families. The following two research questions guide this study:

1. What are some of the factors that influence the sense of identity and belonging to the community of mixed-race Mohawk women from Kahnawà:ke?

2. Which cultural practices or ways of life did their families transmit to our participants, and what do they consider important to transmit to subsequent generations?

Figure 1 - Map of the Quebec Aboriginal Communities



Source: https://www.cssspnql.com/en/about-us/communities

The sample of participants for this study was restricted to mixed-race Mohawk women who have a Mohawk biological mother from Kahnawà:ke and a biological father who is non-Native. The participants had to have a Native mother and non-Native father because as we will see in the following chapter, the Indian Act has a history of discriminating against Native women married to non-Native men. Moreover, I am interested in the transmission of cultural identity, and Mohawks traditionally follow a matrilineal system of inheritance, which is why I chose to focus on women over men. The interviews with the women were carried out during the summer of 2015, around the same time the community received much media coverage over Kahnawà:ke membership and residency law (colloquially known as the "marry out, get out rule"), a community-based policy that prohibits Kahnawà:ke Mohawks married to non-Natives from living together on the reserve. Presented below are some examples of the news reports on the issue from 2014 and 2015.

CBC news

Kahnawake mixed couple subject of 'marry out, stay out' protest

Mohawk man, non-native wife say they are afraid for their family's safety

By Tanya Birkbeck, CBC News Posted: May 02, 2015 4:48 PM ET | Last Updated: May 02, 2015 6:58 PM ET

People in Kahnawake, Que., protested in front of the home where a Mohawk man and his non-native wife live. Mixed couples are prohibited by the territory's law from living on Mohawk land. (CBC)

Kahnawake sends new round of eviction notices

CHRISTOPHER CURTIS, MONTREAL GAZETTE
More from Christopher Curtis, Montreal Gazette

Published on: November 18, 2015 | Last Updated: April 12, 2016 3:04 PM EST

MONTREAL GAZETTE

A Kahnawake law prohibits non-native residence in the South Shore reserve. KAHNAWAKE RESIDENT

Politique

Le problème des couples mixtes à Kahnawake

Le dimanche 17 mai 2015

radio-canada.ca

Maison d'un couple mixte vandalisée à Kahnawake. Photo : Radio-Canada/Danny Braün

La réserve mohawk de Kahnawake, près de Montréal, fait à nouveau parler d'elle avec les menaces d'éviction contre des résidents, des couples dont un des conjoints n'est pas mohawk. Danny Braün s'est intéressé à l'application, soudaine et variable, de ce règlement interne datant de 1981 par un petit groupe traditionaliste.

16 familles seraient visées par la présente campagne entre autres marquée par des manifestations et des actes de vandalisme. Ottawa et Québec se sont montrés préoccupés par la situation; une situation qui risque de s'envenimer à quelques semaines des élections du nouveau Conseil de bande, le 20 juin. Pour une partie de la communauté cependant, la présence des couples mixtes à Kahnawake est source d'injustice et menace la vitalité de la culture mohawk.

Publié le 15 août 2014 à 05h00 | Mis à jour le 15 août 2014 à 08h36

Kahnawake réservé aux Mohawks

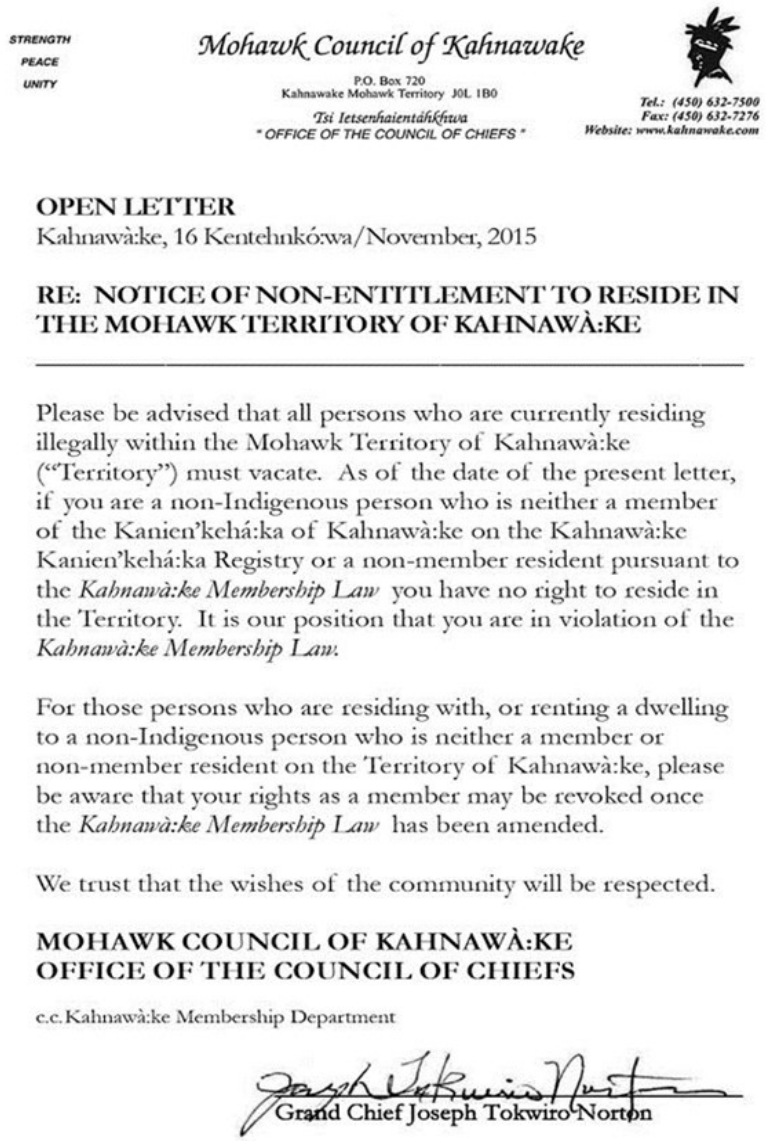
LA PRESSE CA

En 2010, des lettres d'éviction avaient été envoyées à 26 conjoints blancs de Mohawks de Kahnawake, dont certaines personnes âgées résidant là depuis très longtemps.

PHOTO DAVID BOILY, ARCHIVES LA PRESSE

While the law has been in place since 1981, some have argued that it has been only selectively enforced over the years. In 2010, it created controversy when eviction letters were sent out to mixed-race couples living on the reserve. The dispute quieted down until it re-emerged in the summer of 2014 when a Mohawk woman and her non-Native husband started construction on their new home in the community. When the construction started, protesters showed up in front of their house, and the couple faced eviction threats from the community.

Figure 2 –Letter from the Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke to residents of Kahnawà:ke sent in November 2015



STRENGTH
PEACE
UNITY

Mohawk Council of Kahnawake

P.O. Box 720
Kahnawake Mohawk Territory J0L 1B0
Tsi Ietsenhaientáhkhwa
" OFFICE OF THE COUNCIL OF CHIEFS "

Tel.: (450) 632-7500
Fax: (450) 632-7276
Website: www.kahnawake.com

OPEN LETTER
Kahnawà:ke, 16 Kentehnkó:wa/November, 2015

RE: NOTICE OF NON-ENTITLEMENT TO RESIDE IN THE MOHAWK TERRITORY OF KAHNAWÀ:KE

Please be advised that all persons who are currently residing illegally within the Mohawk Territory of Kahnawà:ke ("Territory") must vacate. As of the date of the present letter, if you are a non-Indigenous person who is neither a member of the Kanien'kehá:ka of Kahnawà:ke on the Kahnawà:ke Kanien'kehá:ka Registry or a non-member resident pursuant to the *Kahnawà:ke Membership Law* you have no right to reside in the Territory. It is our position that you are in violation of the *Kahnawà:ke Membership Law.*

For those persons who are residing with, or renting a dwelling to a non-Indigenous person who is neither a member or non-member resident on the Territory of Kahnawà:ke, please be aware that your rights as a member may be revoked once the *Kahnawà:ke Membership Law* has been amended.

We trust that the wishes of the community will be respected.

MOHAWK COUNCIL OF KAHNAWÀ:KE
OFFICE OF THE COUNCIL OF CHIEFS

c.c. Kahnawà:ke Membership Department

Grand Chief Joseph Tokwiro Norton

Source: www.kahnawake.com

In a CBC news report (August 14, 2014), Michael Delisle, the Grand Chief of the Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke (MCK) at the time, explained why the laws were necessary: "All we are trying to do is preserve not only culture and language and identity, but who we are as a people, and those days of incorporating others into our society, I won't say is over, but it needs to be controlled by us, and not by outside entities." Preserving the community's limited resources and real estate for the use of Mohawks is also at the heart of the argument. Nonetheless, many find that asking mixed-couples to leave infringes on basic human rights. As covered in a news article published on June 30, 2015 in the Montreal Gazette, the Centre for Research Action on Race Relations (CRARR) is helping some Kahnawá:ke Mohawks to challenge the community rule in a lawsuit brought to the Human Rights Commission of Canada. The executive director of the CRARR stated that many of those who are asked to leave the community are Status Indians married to non-Natives and children of a mixed marriage between a Mohawk individual and a non-Native. The executive director stated:

> "They have status as Indians registered under the Indian Act, they're Mohawks but they can't vote (in local elections), they can't buy a home, they can't have access to social services on the reserve. They identify as Mohawks, they were raised in the culture, they've grown up in the community. They're in their 20s and 30s and they're excluded. We're not talking about white people, we're talking about Mohawks who are the children of bi-racial couples."

At present, seven couples are involved in a lawsuit against the band council over the membership law. A Mohawk man married to non-Native woman participating in the lawsuit told the CBC (May 02, 2015): "It's not right, I feel, because we're all human beings. I married my wife not because of her colour or her race, but because she's a lovely person. She loves me for who I am, and I love her for who she is." As the conflicting views of the different parties involved (the band council and the mixed couples affected by the law) were often presented in the media, I noticed that the experiences of the mixed couples' children living in and outside the community were rarely presented. What was their side of the story? I wondered how this situation affected them, and what *their* experiences were growing up in a "mixed-blood" family. This exploratory research study offers a place for their narratives. I believe this is an important study because very little is known about mixed-Mohawk people from Kahnawà:ke, and their experiences are often overlooked and/or misunderstood by people living both on and

off the reserve. And in addition to these more personal considerations, there is much sociological knowledge to be gained from this inquiry.

As past events inform the present, I begin this thesis by providing some basic historical information. Chapter One provides an overview of Canada's historical role in defining Native identity via the Indian Act, and a description of the membership and residency rule in Kahnawà:ke. The second chapter presents a summary of selected literature on the topics of mixed-race identity and the transmission of culture in mixed couples. Chapter Three describes the methodology used to carry out this research. Chapters Four and Five present the results of this study on the participants' sense of cultural identity and belonging and the factors influencing them as well as the intergenerational transmission of culture. Finally, Chapter six provides a discussion on the outcomes of this study.

CHAPTER 1 - CANADA'S INDIAN ACT AND THE KAHNAWÀ:KE MEMBERSHIP LAW: EFFECTS ON WOMEN

The following chapter provides a brief historical overview of Canada's Indian Act and the Kahnawà:ke membership and residency law. Canada's Indian Act has existed for the last two centuries. Bonita Lawrence (2004), author of *"Real" Indians and Others: Mixed-Blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood*, has explained the damaging effects of the Indian Act on Aboriginal identity and culture, observing the ways in which:

> Canada has been able to use the Indian status to define who can be considered Indian in ways that have alienated whole communities from any access to a land base and permanently fragmented Native identity through an extremely patriarchal and racist system that has torn large holes in the fabric of Native societies. (Lawrence, 2004, p. 229)

In the following sections, I describe Canada's Indian Act and how it has shaped Native identity, as well as the debate over the membership issue that many mixed couples and mixed-blood Mohawks from Kahnawà:ke face today. A summary of the membership and residency law in Kahnawà:ke will also be presented in this chapter. Bear in mind that this is only a brief overview of the legislation. Due to spatial limitations, the thesis format does not allow for a complete historical and in-depth analysis.

1. The Creation of the Indian Act

Convinced they landed in India in the late fifteenth century, European settlers referred to the Indigenous population they encountered as "Indians." James S. Frideres, sociologist and author of *First Nations in the Twenty-First Century* (2011), explains that upon first contact, the boundaries between colonizers and "Indians" were clearly delimited based on their differences (language, skin colour and customs). Over time, colonizer and colonized intermingled and their offspring were called Métis. Frideres explained that it became difficult for Europeans to differentiate between the Indians, Europeans, and Métis. As a result, the government of Canada enacted the Indian Act in 1876, which outlined the requirements for who could legally be considered "Indian." Today, the Indian Act continues to be govern all the legal affairs that regard registered status Indians, Indian reserves, and bands.

The first version of the Indian Act was much more inclusive than it is today. Previously under the act, anyone adopted by Natives or anyone with Indian ancestry would automatically be considered Indian. The requirements for Indian Status have become stricter over time. At present, adoptees and many mixed-blood Natives cannot receive Indian status because they do not meet the requirements. Those who posess Indian status have their names on the Indian register (the Indian "roll"), managed by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, the federal department that administers the Indian Act for over 600 bands in Canada. Indian status entitles one to legal and fiduciary rights (education, health and social services, housing, etc) from the government that non-status Indians, Métis and Inuit people are not eligible to receive. In the words of Frideres, "from the perspective of the government, only registered Indians are considered as part of their legal responsibility" (2011, p. 28).

1.1 Enfranchisement and Gender Discrimination in the Indian Act

From 1876 until the 1950s, registered Indians had the option to voluntarily or involuntarily become Canadian citizens by giving up their Indian status. The conversion from Indian status to Canadian citizenship is called "enfranchisement," defined by Lawrence as "the removal of Indian status from an individual, thereby creating a Canadian citizen of Aboriginal heritage who has relinquished his collective ties to his Native community and any claims to Aboriginal rights" (2004, p. 31). In addition to forfeiting their Aboriginal rights and identity, most times they were unable to live in their community, as membership in their band would also be revoked. Lawrence (2004) also explains that the government marketed enfranchisement as a "privilege" offered to Native people. This marketing tactic was unsuccessful because only a small percent of Indians agreed to it. As a result, involuntary (compulsory) enfranchisement was enacted in the 1920s, and Indians could lose their legal status if, for example, they obtained "a certain education level, spoke English/French fluently, served in the war, or were integrated in the economic system. […] This involuntary process was particularly active in the early 1920s when First Nations soldiers who fought for Canada returned from World War I" (Lawrence, 2004, p. 26).

As mentioned earlier, the Indian Act was especially discriminatory towards Indian women and their children. Most First Nations communities traditionally follow a matrilineal system of inheritance, but under the Indian Act, status could only be transmitted via the

father's lineage. Meaning that if a Native woman married a non-Native man, she would automatically be enfranchised and their children could not inherit her Indian status. Moreover, if a Native woman was widowed or abandoned by her husband, she would also lose her status. In essence, a Native woman's Indian status was dependent on her husband. This discrimination was not aimed at Native men married to non-Native women. In fact, if a Native man married a non-Native woman, she would gain Indian Status and so would their children. In most cases, enfranchised Native women and her children were not allowed to live in their tribal community, but Native men and their non-Native wives and children could. Mahtani (2014) wrote that the impact of Native women's enfranchisement has done irreversible damage to Native women and their children in terms of loss of identity and community. Enfranchisement "separated Indigenous women and many generations of their children from their own communities, resulting in their legal, physical, and psychic disconnection from their land, communities, cultural and spiritual traditions, and economic base" (Mahtani 2014, p. 55) Many scholars agree that the disempowerement of Native women via the process of enfranchisement was part of the plan to assimilate Native families into dominant Canadian society (Lawrence 2004; King 2003; Thompson 2008; Kelly 2011). As Lawrence explains, it was a "highly divisive manner of externalizing 'half-breeds' and creating patriarchal divisions within Native communities, which automatically and continuously 'bled off' people from their communities without the need for other policies of removal" (2004, p. 7).

1.2 Significant Changes in the Indian Act: Bill C-31 and Indian Bands Right to Administer their Membership Criteria

In 1973, Mary Two-Axe Early (1911–1996), a Mohawk woman from Kahnawà:ke, became the official spokesperson for the "Equal Rights for Indian Woman" campaign. In 1975, she was invited to represent Canada on the topic of women's status at a conference in Mexico. While she was abroad, she and 60 other women from Kahnawà:ke involved in the movement had their Indian status revoked and were sent eviction notices from the band

council in their community[1]. After this event, she became one of the main advocates against the injustices faced by Native women under the Indian Act. Other important women known for challenging and bringing international attention to the gender discrimination in the Indian Act include Lavell (1971), Bedard (1973) and Lovelace (1974). Lawrence (2004) explains that all three lost their status and were forcibly removed from their Native communities for marrying non-Native men. Sandra Lovelace brought her case in front of the United Nations Human Rights committee, and in 1981 it was determined that Canada had disobeyed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.[2] After this incident, Canada drafted a bill to correct the gender discrimination in the Indian Act; it would be known as Bill-C 31 and it was brought into law in 1985.

Under Bill C-31, no one could gain or lose Indian status by virtue of marriage. Moreover, the women and their children who lost their status would technically be able to regain it and could theoretically return to live in their Native communities. However, Frideres reports "by 2009 close to 40% who felt they were 'Indian' were denied that identification by government officials" (2011, p. 30). Many of the applicants did not regain their Indian status because of the new restrictions created under Bill C-31. It created two types of Indian, Section 6(1) Indians and Section 6(2) Indians, and a "second-generation cut-off." Depending on the marriage partners of section 6(1) and section 6(2) Indians, the second-generation and the generations that followed would not be able to obtain Indian status. Frideres explains this by providing a helpful example:

> If one of the marriage partners is a section 6(1) Indian but marries a non-Indian person, then any children of that marriage will be section 6(2) Indians (still on the registry). Then if that section 6(2) Indian marries a non-Indian person, the children of that marriage will no longer be Indians. In short, the new bill imposes a new rule for women regarding all second-generation descendants. In order for a child to have Indian status, both parents must be under section 6(1).

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[1] http://www.ordre-national.gouv.qc.ca

[2] According to Beyefsky, this is the statute that "provides for the rights of individuals who belong to minorities to enjoy their culture, practice their religion, and use their language in community with others from the group" (Beyefsky 1982, pp. 244-66, cited in Lawrence, 2004, p. 57).

> If this ideal situation is breached, the offspring will no longer be considered Indians. (Frideres, 2011, p. 30)

In essence, this change implied that in the same family, some second-generation siblings and cousins may be registered as status Indians, while others, depending on their marriage patterns, may not. In 2010, amendments were made with Bill C-3[3], allowing reinstated women registered as section 6(2) to be eligible to obtain status as section 6(1).

Another important change that came into effect at the same time as Bill C-31 was that the government authorized Indian bands to administer their membership and residency laws in their communities. Prior to Bill C-31, band membership in one's community automatically came with Indian status. After Bill C-31 passed, a person could obtain legal Indian status with the federal government, but may not meet the local criteria for membership in their own community. The Mohawk community of Kahnawà:ke is one of the bands that took control of their membership and citizenship laws. Dickson-Gilmore (1999) observes the ways in which:

> The Mohawk Council's position has created the rather unique context wherein an individual may be defined as both a status Indian and a member of the Kahnawake band by the DIAND (department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development), but be rejected as a Mohawk of Kahnawake by the Mohawk Council and thus unable to access any of the rights or priveleges which should theoretically flow from their status and membership in the Kahnawake band. (Dickson-Gilmore, 1999, p.47)

Moreover, Audra Simpson, author of *Mohawk Interruptus* (2014), explained that one of the reasons for establishing membership and residency criteria in Kahnawà:ke was "to exclude some who might return to the community as social outsiders, strangers who might then have rights to residency" (p. 62). Indeed. After Bill C-31 many Native women, their non-Native husbands and their children tried to return to the community, but were unable to obtain membership. According to Simpson, and confirmed by some our participants, these "social

[3] Bill C-3 removed the sex-based inequality affecting the grandchildren of Indian women who had married non-Indians, but it did not address inequalites that affected the 3rd generation (great-grandchildren) of these women. Further amendments are expected by February 3, 2017 as a result of the Descheneaux court case. Please see Indigenous and Northern Affairs website:https://www.aadncaandc.gc.ca/eng/1467227680166/1467227697623 for more information on the Descheneaux case.

outsiders" and "strangers" are often referred to as "C-31s" by members of the community. As Simpson explains, some community members believe that these Mohawk women made the choice to "marry out" so they should simply stay out of the community. This is in line with Lawrence's observations about the history of gender discrimination in the Indian Act being internalized by some Natives. As Lawrence (2004) states:

> After over a century of gender discrimination in the Indian Act, the idea that Native women should lose status for marrying non-status or non-Native men has become a normalized assumption in many communities. As a result, our basic understanding of who is mixed-blood and who is not is highly shaped by gender. The family histories of on-reserve Native people have routinely included the presence of white women married to Native men, as well as (in some cases) the children of Native women who had babies by white men but were not married to them, and whose status was not protested. These experiences have not been seen, or theorized, as mixed-blood experiences. These mixed blood children have been allowed to have Indian status, they have been considered to be Indian and have never had to leave their communities. (Lawrence, 2004, p. 61)

As we will see below, the participants of this study confirmed that what Lawrence describes above is a reality in Kahnawà:ke. The experiences of children of Mohawk women married to non-Native men differ from those of children of non-Native women married to Mohawk men who were allowed to stay on the reservation.

2. A Legacy of the Indian Act: The Kahnawà:ke Membership and Residency Law

The following section provides a brief description of the community of Kahnawà:ke and the membership and residency law. The territory of Kahnawà:ke is home to about 7,727 Kahnawà:kero:non (people of Kahnawà:ke) spread out across an area of 48,05 square kilometres. There is also a reported 2,725 Kahnawà:kero:non living outside the reserve.[4] Kahnawà:ke is one the eight Mohawk communities that make up the Mohawk nation,[5] which

[4] Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada: http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/

[5] The eight Mohawk communities are located in Canada and in the United States: Akwesasne, Kahnawà:ke, Kanesatake, Six Nations, Tyendinaga and Wahta (Canada). Kanatsiohareke and Ganienke (US)

is one of the six Indigenous nations (Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora) that form the Iroquois (also called the Haudenosaunee, or people of the longhouse) confederacy. These Iroquois nations are traditionally matrilineal and they function according to a clan system—each person belongs to the same clan as his or her mother. The nine principle clans are Bear, Wolf, Turtle, Beaver, Heron, Snipe, Hawk, Deer, and Eel. In her book entitled *Iroquoian Woman: The Gantowisas*, Barbara Mann (2000) explains that Iroquoian women's lives were once considered twice as important as men's lives because of their high social and political power. The political power of Iroquoian women inspired early feminist writers in Europe: "Largely through the work of Sally Roesch Wagner, it has come to the attention of modern historians and feminists alike that the gantowisas inspired the nineteenth-century American feminists, providing their cited model of socially, economically, and politically free womanhood" (Mann, 2000, p. 242). The women held a place of honor in the longhouse, which is the traditional Iroquois home[6]. Longhouses were led by the clan mother who had the political authority and numerous responsibilities in the community.

As the clans are matrilineal, mixed Mohawk children with a non-Native mother cannot belong to a clan. Moreover, the mixed-blood Mohawk children with an enfranchised Native mother also cannot belong to a clan. Simpson (2014) notes that during the founding days of Kahnawà:ke, Kahnawà:kero:non were very inclusive and welcoming to strangers living on their territory. In the past, it was not unusual for Mohawks to adopt "outsiders" into their community and adoptees could become Mohawk with the clan system.

> Kahnawà:ke from its formation was a racially and culturally heterogenous community. Outsiders from other nations and races were integrated into the community and "made" Mohawk through their commitment to Mohawk culture. This was not problematic until the construct of race became important to Kahnawà:kero:non."Race" became important at the time when being "Mohawk" became being "Indian" and being Indian carried rights. (Simpson, 2014, p.94)

[6] According to Mann (2000), up to a hundred members of the same clan might live in one longhouse. Today, the longhouses are used only for traditional ceremonial purposes.

Throughout Kahnawà:ke's history, political tensions over land claims have characterized the relationship between the Mohawk reserve of Kahnawà:ke, and the province of Quebec and Canada. Simpson (2014) posits that Kahnawà:ke's history with the dominant society affects the ways the residents currently interact with "outsiders." According to Simpson (2014), throughout the entire 18th and 19th centuries, "fifty thousand acres of Kahnawà:ke territory have been "lost"; most specifically, it was deeded away by the Catholic Church" (p.49). She describes how critical events such as the seaway expropriation[7] (1954–1959), the Oka Crisis (1990), which we will discuss at greater length in chapter 4, and the history of colonial dispossession all remain in the collective historical memory of Kahnawà:kero:non. As Simpson (2014) writes:

> Each [event] articulates a fear or an immanent sense of disappearance. […] This history of death and anxiety of disapearance has a clear impact on the way Kahnawà:kero:non deal with the problem of membership and how they invoke their past relationships, both within the reserve and with the outside world. […] In Kahnawà:ke, that memory structures day-today relationships, and in doing so feeds into the politics of the reserve. (Simpson, 2014,p. 43)

Understandably, these events have impacted their relationship with the dominant Canadian and Quebecois society, adding to the fear of cultural disappearance and the sense of cynicism towards government bodies. Moreover, the political tensions between Kahnawà:ke and the outside have had a great influence on the lives of children of mixed couples. We will discuss the influence of such events in greater detail in the results section of this study.

The Kahnawà:ke Membership and Residency Law

Holding membership in Kahnawà:ke allows one to live and own property on the reserve, go to school on the reserve, vote in the band council and elections, and be buried on the reserve. Moreover, one could argue that membership also offers a strong sense of collective identity and belonging to this community. For example, Lawrence (2004) explained that membership provides "a sense of being grounded in a collective, place-based identity"

[7]For more information on the St-Lawrence Seaway expropriation see Stephanie K. Phillips, "The Kahnawà:keKahnawà:ke Mohawks and the St. Lawrence Seaway" (Master's thesis, Mcgill University, 2000).

(p.196). The following section briefly describes the evolution of the membership and residency law in the community.

In 1981, the Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke announced the "Moratorium on Mixed Marriages" in an attempt to regulate the residency in the community. In 1984, the *Kahnawà:ke Membership Law* was officialised. Mixed couples who were married or living common law prior to 1981 could continue to live on the reserve. However, non-Natives who were not living in Kahnawà:ke prior to the 1981 morotarium were asked to vacate the territory. In addition, the "blood quantum" measure was introduced to calculate residents' percentage of "pure" Mohawk blood. One was required to have at least 50% Mohawk blood to be eligible for membership. Simpson (2003) explains the effects of the Mohawk law on membership and the blood quantum on Mohawk women and their children who were reinstated under Bill C-31,

> The Mohawk law on membership and the blood quantum rule effectivelty made it impossible for a woman and her children to return to the community unless she could prove that she was widowed or divorced and that she and her children possessed fifty percent blood quantum. Although the woman and her children may have been reinstated on the federal list, their reinstatement on the band list was far from automatic. (Simpson, 2003, p.22)

In 2003, the Kahnawà:ke Membership Law was amended, and membership in the community was no longer determined by blood quantum. Instead, a person had to have at least four Mohawk great-grandparents to be eligible for membership in the community[8] and "must be identified as a Kanien'kehá:ka of Kahnawà:ke at birth (must be born of 2 members, or born of 1 member and the other parent being one of the 5 Iroquois nations (Seneca, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Tuscarora)"[9]. The applications for membership in the community have been on freeze since 2007. The membership law has been undergoing revisions in the community decision-making process since a report highlighting issues and offering recomandations was issued in October 2007 by the Membership Department in Kahnawà:ke.The question of who has the right to live in Kahnawà:ke is an ongoing debate in

[8] Each great-grandparent must have had 100 percent Indian blood.
[9] Source: Kahnawà:ke website: http://www.Kahnawake.com/.

the community. While many consider the ban to be unfair, many community members believe the law to be necessary. For example, the MCK conducted a survey in 2011 to obtain community members' opinions on the topic of membership, one of the questions in the survey was: "Should the Kahnawà:ke Membership Law allow all non-natives married to a member to live in Kahnawà:ke?" Out of the 360 respondents, 263 respondents (78%) disagreed or somewhat disagreed, and 76 (22%) agreed, somewhat agreed or totally agreed.[10] These numbers demonstrate that many residents are in favour of the law. However, those who participated in this survey may already live in the community and are not necessarily directly affected by the membership rule. I believe the results from this survey to be in line with what Lawrence (2004) explains:

> For many Native people today, the common-sense nature of identity legislation may appear to be relatively innocuous. If they are band members (in Canada) whose Indian status has never been threatened with removal, or if they (and their children) have sufficient blood quantum […] it can even appear to be serving a necessary function in protecting their communities from mixed-blood or bill C-31 "outsiders." […] It is primarily those who are mixed-blood, as well as others who have been removed from their communities by any number of colonialist policies, who often find themselves caught on the "wrong side" of identity legislation. (Lawrence, 2004, p. 45–46)

In this chapter, I have briefly outlined the successive forms of federal and local legislation that Mohawks have had to contend with over the centuries. Various amendments to the Indian Act have been made thoughout time, but Canadian legislation continues to have a grasp on the daily aspects of Natives lives and identity. Over the course of history, Native women have had to put up with discriminatory gender legislation that has had rippling intergenerational effect. As a result of the gender based laws, generations of Native women married to non-Native men and their mixed children who were denied Indian Status, were often excluded from their communities.

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[10] Source: Kahnawà:ke website: http://www.Kahnawake.com. (21 people did not answer the question in the survey.)

Moreover, the Mohawk community of Kahnawà:ke is an enclave within the larger Quebecois and Canadian ensemble. In the minds of most people who call themselves Mohawks, Kahnawà:ke is a nation separate from Canada (Dickson-Gilmore, 1999). As per Dickson-Gilmore "Kahnawake Mohawks do not vote in federal or provincial elections and view the infamous 'Canada Quebec Question' as something outside the borders of their community and interests." (p.29). The membership law acts as an invisible border separating Kahnawà:ke from the rest of Canada and it is considered by many as necessary to maintain independence and to avoid further assimilation and encroachment by the dominant Canadian society. Those that are denied membership in Kahnawà:ke must find a place to call home outside of the invisible border, as such securing a sense of identity and belonging to the community may be much more complex and difficult to achieve. Audra Simpson (2014) asked the following questions: Can you claim an identity or a membership within a political grouping if it does not claim you?" (p.63). I believe this question speaks deeply to the sense of identity and belonging that the present study attempts to explore. In the next chapter, I provide an overview of some of the literature on the identity of mixed individuals and the transmission of culture in mixed couples. In addition, the particularities of studying these topics in an Indigenous context will be discussed.

CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH PROBLEMATIC

The chapter begins by introducing the notion of "mixedness" and its changing meanings across various contexts. It is followed by an overview of some of the significant studies on mixed-race identity and the transmission of culture from mixed couples to their children. The last section of this chapter describes the research problematic.

1. 'Mixedness': A Hard Notion to Define

Discussions on mixedness vary from one society to another, as well as over periods in history, making it a difficult concept to define. Le Gall (2003) offered an analogy by Breger and Hill (1998) comparing the notion of mixedness to a "good marriage" to elucidate the complexity in defining the concept: "What constitutes a 'good marriage' in local terms, or what is important in a marriage, varies not only from one society to another, or from one ethnic group to another, but also within smaller groups, even within families and across generations" (Le Gall, 2003, p.7). As the meaning of "mixed" is highly subjective, depending on the social, historical, and geopolitical context in which this concept is studied, scholars and governmental agencies have yet to find an appropriate definition that could be applied universally (Aspinall, 2009). As a result, different authors and policy-makers have used the same word while not necessarily meaning the same thing. This is a growing concern amongst researchers in the field because the experiences of different mixed populations are frequently talked about in the same way (Aspinall & Song 2013; Mahtani 2014). As Mahtani explains:

> We have somewhat disingenuously assumed that all people who identify as mixed share similar experiences, as though there were a unified pan-multiraciality. There is not. Although people of different racialized backgrounds may choose to identify as mixed race, the historical freight associated with these backgrounds is not the same. Within the category of mixed race identity lie distinct racial subjectivities that cannot be easily united under a single banner. (Mahtani,2014, p. 246)

While there is no generalized definition of what constitutes mixedness, most would agree that to be considered a mixed couple there must be an apparent racial, ethnic or religious social distance between the partners. The mixed couple is understood as transgressing the "symbolic

boundary" that seperates their groups, which in turn elicits a reaction from their environment (Puzenat, 2008). The difficulty lies in determining what is considered a transgression of norms at a given time, and in a given society or family, because every group has a different set of cultural rules and boundaries that exert control over the behaviour of its members. For example, American and British studies normally use the term mixed to refer to a child born of parents belonging to different "racial" groups (typically Black and White, or Asian and White) (Tizard and Phoenix 2001; Brunsma and Rockquemore 2001; Zack, 2010). In Canada, Statistics Canada defines mixed unions as "a couple in which one spouse or partner belongs to a visible minority group and the other does not, as well as a couple in which the two spouses or partners belong to different visible minority groups."[11] In Francophone settings, the research mostly describes mixedness in terms of differences in ethnicity, nationality, or faith. For example, social scientists in France generally speak of mixed marriages as unions between a person born living in France and an immigrant spouse living in France, typically of Maghrebin, or North African, descent (Puzenat, 2008; Collet and Santelli, 2012). Ann Unterreiner (2015), who recently completed a study on the identity of mixed children in different national contexts (France, Belgium, and the UK), defines mixed individuals as those whose parents are born in different countries. In Quebec, prior to the Quiet Revolution, mixedness referred primarily to differences in religion (e.g. unions between Catholics and Protestants). Today, authors in Quebec suggest that mixedness is chiefly discussed in terms of differences in language, religion or ethnicity. See, for example, Leblanc (2001) on the ethnic identity choices of mixed Quebecker Armenians, and Cassan (2008) on the choices of transmission of cultural and religious identity markers to the children of Maghrebian-Quebecker and Islamic-Christian couples in Montreal. Thus, discussions of mixedness are

[11] The Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour." The visible minority population consists mainly of the following groups: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean and Japanese. Source: Statistics Canada. https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/ref/guides/99-010-x/99-010-x2011009-eng.cfm

highly specific to the historical and sociopolitical context of the given society, which is why it is hard to find a universally applicable definition.

Given the ambiguity of the word, Aspinall and Song (2013) remind researchers to "be careful about making assumptions about what mixed means" (p. 189). As such, it is necessary to explain how I am defining mixedness. Our participants used the terms "mixed," "mixed race," "multiracial," and "mixed-blood" when describing themselves and their experiences. I choose to use these terms interchangeably throughout the study to refer to children who are born of parents from different ethnic, religious, or "racial" groups. Social scientists often place the terms "race" and "mixed race" in quotes as a way of emphasizing the artificial and constructed—not biological—nature of this concept. I will not make use of such quotes, simply to avoid redundancy.

1.1 The Evolution of Mixed-Race Identity Studies

Early scientific and social science research was not kind to mixed children. Much of the research was not based on empirical evidence, but rather on assumptions. As well, until the mid-twentieth century, various pseudo-scientific and eugenic discourses were used to control the social acceptance of interracial unions (Christian, 2000; Farber, 2011). Theories of racial dilution and the supposed inherited pathologies of the mixed-race child (physical and psychological) were the main arguments against mixed marriages. Although empirical research on the subject was almost non-existent at the time, the general consensus amongst the scientific community was that the mixing of genes from different races would create offspring with undesirable physical and mental characteristics. It would produce "biologically dysfunctional" children with a "chaotic constitution" (Farber, 2011). As a result of such discourses, the anti-miscegenation law, which prohibited mixed marriages and relationships, was enacted in the US. Under this law, marriages between Whites and "Blacks, Asians, Indians and Native Americans, 'Orientals' 'Malays' Native Hawaiians and in some cases, simply all non-Whites'" were forbidden until 1967 (Thompson, 2008, p. 2). An anti-miscegenation law was not ordained in Canada. However, as we we demonstrated in the previous chapter, the Indian Act did regulate interracial unions between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals. Debra Thompson (2008) compared the anti-miscegenation law in the US with the Indian Act in Canada, and she found marked points of comparison between the two regimes.

For example, Thompson argued that both laws targeted specific groups and they regulated the sexuality of these groups and not others. In both cases, the violation of these policies came with severe sanctions. In the US, until 1967 disobeying the anti-miscegenation law led to imprisonment. There was no imprisonment of mixed couples in Canada, but as we illustrated previously, until 1985 the sanction for Aboriginal women married to non-Aboriginal men was forced enfranchisement and exclusion from their Native community.

Moreover, Fernandez in Maria Root (1996) wrote that children of mixed-race couples in the US were often economically deprived and held socially marginalized statuses within society: "If interracial liaisons were prohibited, then the offspring of same were, in the eyes of the law, illegitimate. Henceforth, as in many states before the war, even in the North, the offspring of what were termed interracial liaisons could not inherit property, an important basis for capital accumulation and thereby power" (Root, 1996, p. 22). Lawrence (2004) also explained that mixed-blood Natives in Canada who had European Caucasian fathers "were also targeted for removal from White society, often through court decisions that made it impossible for them to inherit their father's property" (Lawrence, 2004, p. 49), which limited their opportunities for advancement.

It was not until the 1960s that researchers started contesting scientific racism, and new scientific evidence began challenging the supposed negative effects of race mixing. Theodosius Dobzhansky, an influential leader in the race mixing debate and a prominent geneticist and biologist, explained how racism had distorted science and was essentially used justify limitations on immigration, slavery, and the laws prohibiting interracial relationships and marriages (Farber, 2011). These new perspectives brought forth important social changes in the United States, such as the Civil Rights movement and the abolishment of the anti-miscegenation law (Loving Vs. Virginia) in 1967.

The early social science research on mixed couples primarily focused on the difficulties these types of unions were likely to encounter (unequal power relations, assimilation, conflict, discrimination, etc.). Their children were often described as having a marginal status in society. American sociologist Robert Ezra Park's theories of "assimilation" and the "marginal man" (1928, 1931) were highly influential in this field. Park developed the "race-relation cycle" to rationalize what happens when members of different ethnic groups come into contact. He also used this model to explain the dynamics of mixed couples. Park's

race-relation cycle has four stages: competition, conflict, accomodation, and assimilation. According to this theory, the process of assimilation is deemed successful when the person from the subordinate group in the mixed couple "merges" into the dominant partner's culture and "gives up" his or her culture of origin in the process. Also, the theory suggests that the mixed child will inevitably adopt the identity of the parent from the dominant group, even if he is not fully accepted by this group. Contemporary perspectives have deemed that Park's theory is too simplistic. While persons in the subordinate group may want to and often join or assimilate into the dominant group, the reality is that their acceptance is not guaranteed. This accords with Chouhdry, who writes: "It is difficult for ethnic minorities to strive for assimilation in a community that demands them to relinquish their heritage. [...] Even if minority individuals attempt to assimilate they are still often judged on their skin colour or race" (Chouhdry, 2010, p. 35).

New evidence suggests that the partner from the subordinate group in the couple does not necessarily "give up" his or her culture. Rather, as we will discuss in further detail below, in the section on the transmission of culture in mixed couples, culture is often maintained and efforts are made by the couple to convey it to their children. In the research by Meintel et al., they interviewed 80 mixed couples in Quebec with at least one child on the topic of transmission of culture and identity to their children.[12](Le Gall and Meintel, 2015). The couples in their study embraced each other's culture, and the differences between the partners were seen as enriching. Their findings go against the theory of assimilation, showing that instead of adopting the culture of the dominant Quebecois society, parents make efforts to preserve aspects of each partners' culture. They wish to transmit as many "cultural resources" as possible to their children in order to give them the opportunity to choose from a large assortment of identity markers when they mature.

Moreover, Park's "marginal man theory" (1928) was influential in explaining the identity of

[12] These consisted of 60 couples from Montreal with a French-speaking Quebecois(e) spouse and an immigrant partner who arrived recently in Quebec, a French-speaking Quebecois(e) and a partner from an ethnic minority born in Quebec or who arrived in Quebec at an early age, or two partners born in Montreal but from different ethnic minority backgrounds. There were also 20 couples from other regions in Quebec consisting of a Quebecois(e) native and an immigrant.

mixed-race individuals. Park compared the experiences of mixed-race people to those of immigrants. He viewed both groups as striving to live in two conflicting cultural worlds while never feeling completely whole in either one. According to Park, the hybrid is a "man on the margin of two cultures and two societies, which never completely interpenetrated and fused" (Park, 1928, p. 892). Park further explained:

> There are no doubt periods of transition and crisis in the lives of most of us that are comparable with those which the immigrant experiences when he leaves home to seek his fortunes in a strange country. But in the case of the "marginal man" the period of crisis is relatively permanent. The result is that he tends to become a personality type. Ordinarily the marginal man is a mixed blood, like the Mulatto in the United States or the Eurasian in Asia, but that is apparently because the man of mixed blood is one who lives in two worlds, in both of which he is more or less a stranger. (1928, p. 893)

He believed that mixed children would be rejected by both parents' racial groups, as well as by society at large. In this way, he interpreted the socially marginalized status of mixed-race children. Their internal struggles to fit in, and their fragmented sense of self, even produced an identity crisis and a distinct personality type: highly sensitive, self-conscious, confused, unstable, and neurotic. Park's student Everett Stonequist (1935, 1937) expanded on the marginal man theory. He related the marginal man's experiences to sociologists W.E.B. Dubois's "double-consciousness" of African Americans and Charles Horton Cooley's "looking-glass self." The Double-Consiciousness of African Americans is explained by Dubois (1903) as:

> A peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels this two-ness- An American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from from being torn asunder. (as cited in Stonequist, 1935, p. 7)

Stonequist also posited that the marginal person had two "looking glasses," each projecting different images of the self: how he self-identifies and what others perceive. As the mixed individual is conscious of the two "clashing images," he suffers from internal conflict and is predisposed to an inferiority complex.

Contemporary scholars of race have since discredited Park and Stonequist's theories as too one-dimensional for understanding the identity processes and experiences of mixed-race

people. Though the marginal-man theory correctly identifies some of the aspects that mixed-race people may experience with regards to their identity, it confines their experiences solely to the level of pathology. Nonetheless, Katz (1996) described that they are worth mentioning because their contributions paved the way to understanding "how the conflicts in the wider society can be reflected in the internal psychological conflicts which affect the most intimate aspects of personality and personal relationships" (p.22). The marginal man theory dominated the social sciences until the 1960s. According to Chouhdry (2010), "studies after the 1960s saw a shift in attitude [as] the literature began to steer clear of the difficulties of being interethnic" (p. 26). In the last few decades, there has been an increase in qualitative research based on interviews with mixed-race individuals, which has allowed for a richer understanding of their experiences and identity choices. Moreover, research conducted by authors of mixed-race heritage have contributed to the advancement of what Caballero calls "insider-led" studies. In 2014, Caballero wrote: "It would not be until the late 80s and early 90s that a new wave of research on mixing and mixedness would challenge the dominant social science approach and perspectives on racially mixed people and their families, predominantly through the development of 'insider-led' studies which placed their voices at the centre of the research" (Caballero, 2014, p. 80). For example, Carol Camper's (1994) anthology *Miscegenation Blues: Voices of Mixed Race Women* includes texts written by over 40 mixed-race women on questions of identity and belonging in Canada. Moreover, many master theses and PhD dissertations on topics of multiraciality written by mixed-race graduate students in various disciplines such as sociology, psychology, social work, anthropology, education, etc., have also surfaced in recent years.

Scholarship in the US and the UK has been at the forefront in terms of the research completed on mixed race topics. However, most of this research is limited to studying couples, children, adolescents, and adults of mixed Black and White heritage, or Asian and White heritage (Zack, 2010; Chouhdry, 2010; Brunsma and Rockquemore, 2001; Ifekwunigwe, 1999; Christian, 2000; Tizard and Phoenix, 2001; Katz, 1996). The academic research on mixed-race issues is much less prevalent in Canada than it is in the US and UK. However, there seems to be a growing interest recently, especially in the Anglophone provinces. Jilian Paragg (2015) looked at the self-identification of mixed-race young adults and their ability to claim or not a "Canadian identity," which her participants reportedly understand as a "White

identity." Paragg also recognized the scarcity of available literature on mixed-race identity studies in Canada: "In contrast to the Canadian context, the body of mixed race literature in the U.S. and the U.K. contexts have grown immensily in the past two decades. Its discussions and debates of mixed race in particular can and should be considered by Canadian mixed-race scholars, despite these countries' different engagements with race" (2015, p. 26).

Moreover, Minelle Mahtani (2002, 2005, 2014) is a key figure in this sphere for her contributions to the body of mixed race-literature in Canada. In her most recent work, *Mixed Race Amnesia*, she argues that society portrays and celebrates mixed-race people as "emblems of a post-racial era," and that this romanticized perception involves a "strategic forgetting of our colonial past as settler states". She also describes how the experiences of mixed-blood Indigenous people in Canada have been greatly understudied by scholars of race in Canada and merit serious consideration in contemporary mixed-race studies. Mahtani (2014) argues that: "Canada is a country with a long history of institutionalized forms of regulation of mixed race identity, accompanied by legislation, yet contemporary scholarship on mixed race identities has not engaged with historical and anticolonial scholarship on the regulation of mixed race Aboriginal relations" (p. 58). This speaks to the need to understand the impact of colonialism on mixed-blood Indigenous people's lives and identities, which the following study attempts to explore. As stated earlier, mixed-blood Indigenous peoples' experiences have been largely overlooked and merit serious consideration in contemporary mixed-race studies.

In the province of Quebec, studies on the identity choices of mixed-race individuals are quite limited. Scholars have treated the question primarily through mixed couples' "parental projects" for their child's identity. These studies have focused on the strategies employed by the mixed couple to transmit cultural identity markers to their child (Meintel et al. 2005, 2014; 2015; Cassan, 2008). We will discuss the transmission of culture in mixed couples in more detail later in this chapter. Le Gall (2003) explained, "Une autre façon d'examiner la question de la transmission identitaire au sein des familles mixtes consiste à se pencher sur l'identité de jeunes eux-mêmes" (p. 55). For example, Annie Leblanc (2001) observed how Montrealers born into a mixed Armenian and French-Canadian family expressed their ethnic identity. Leblanc supposed that the context of a multicultural city like Montreal is one that promotes and emphasizes ethnic diversity. Hence, ethnic Montrealers may not feel the need to assimilate

into the dominant group as much as in other Canadian cities. Leblanc's hypothesis for her research was that her participants would most likely associate more with their Armenian identity rather than their French-Canadian identity. Indeed, her results revealed that the participants identified more with the Armenian side of their mix. Close contact with the Armenian family and attending Armenian school were important factors to help the transmission of culture and the development of an Armenian identity. The results from this study are interesting because they contradict Robert Park's assimilation theory, whereby the mixed individual will automatically assimilate into society's dominant group. Moreover, this research is influential because it is the only one in Quebec that has looked at the question of mixed identity by interviewing the subjects in question, instead of their parents. In recent years, outside of Quebec, there has been a growing number of authors who have focused on mixed people's experiences by taking into account the point of view of the individuals themselves, instead of relying on their parents' perspectives (Aspinall and Song, 2013; Unterreiner, 2015, etc). The present study will contribute to the existing research on the topic.

The following section provides an overview of some of the factors that influence the identity choices and experiences of mixed-race people that have been identified in the studies on mixed individuals or mixed couples. As previously mentioned, there is a very limited amount of studies that have focused on this topic in an Indigenous context. Thus, most of the literature presented below pertains to, but is not necessarily limited to, the factors that influence the identity choices of mixed-race people of non-Indigenous backgrounds.

1.2 Influencing Factors on Mixed-Race Identity and Experiences

There are myriad factors that can influence the experieces and identity choices of mixed-race individuals. However, the studies that have looked at these factors typically only consider one or a few of variables at a time. Amongst some the factors that are discussed in the literature, which are also congruent with the findings in our study, we find the influence of physical appearance (Brunsma and Rockquemore, 2001; Song and Aspinall, 2012; Choudhry, 2010; Rockquemore, 2006; Gonzalez-Backen, 2013), experiences with discrimination (Herman, 2004; Chouhdry, 2010; Gonzales-Backen, 2013), immediate and extended family relations (Leblanc, 2001; Herman, 2004), parental influence (Christian, 2000), names (Leblanc, 2001; Varro, 2003), geographical location (i.e. neighbourhood and school) (Herman,

2004), and social network (Rockquemore and Brunsma, 2002; Herman, 2004; Unterreiner 2015). All of the factors mentioned above are important influences for the sense of identity of mixed-race people. While it is very difficult to say which of these factors are most influential, physical appearance and discrimination are most often repeated in the literature as playing a significant role on the identity of mixed-race people. Therefore, the following literature review will focus on these factors only.

Although we have come a long way since the pathologization of racialized individuals, racial categories as an organizing principle of society remain unquestionably meaningful today. Indeed, phenotypical traits like hair, skin and eye color and body types are cues that allow us to quickly decipher where a person stands in the racial classification system. In the video entitled, Race: A Floating Signifier, Stuart Hall (1996) explained that we engage in "meaning making practices," we make meaning out of what we see. It allows us to keep some sort of order; it is a way to organize our social worlds and the place we have in it. According to Hall (1996), "we read the body as a text and we are all readers of it. We go around inspecting it like literary critics closer and closer for those very fine differences, subtle differences […] and when that doesn't work, we run the combinations". We run the combinations to figure out where the person is from. Often, mixed-race people have ambiguous physical characteristics making it hard for others to categorize them in a racial group. As Rockquemore (2006) states:

> The physical characteristics of biracial individuals range widely in skin colour, hair texture, and facial features. […] Because racial categories are defined by appearances, the logic and enactment of racial categorization becomes questionable if individuals cannot be identified on sight. One's skin colour, hair and facial features are strong membership cues in socially defined racial groups. (Rockquemore, 2006, p. 153)

Not being able to place them in a "category" is what usually prompts curious onlookers to question mixed-race people about their ethnic or racial backgrounds and to point out their differences. An excerpt from an interview in Choudhry's study with a young girl of mixed origins demonstrates the effects this can have on one's sense of identity:

> In primary school, we had to make drawings about each other, but my friend said she couldn't find a colour to draw me, she said, you're not pink and you're not brown. […] It wasn't that she was being mean but it upset me, that's how she saw me but that's really when I started thinking about who I was, about my

> identity, before at home I used to think that I was just me and everyone would accept that. (Chouhdry, 2010, p. 112)

Confronted by her peer's perception of her made this participant contemplate her sense of identity at a young age, something she had not put much thought into before. Moreover, Leblanc's (2001) study on individuals of mixed Armenian and French-Canadian heritage showed that her participants were interrogated on a regular basis about their ethnic identity. She stated: "Ils ont à répondre à plusieurs questions de leur entourage et semblent avoir régulièrement été amenés à réfléchir sur leur définition identitaire" (p. 116). Having to regularly answer questions about their ethnic/racial identity may bring mixed individuals to contemplate, renegotiate, and perhaps reconstruct their identity more often than mono-racial or mono-ethnic people. For example, Rockquemore (2006) explained that biracial individuals who do not have typical "Black" or "White" physical features are often asked the question that so many mixed people are familiar with: "What are you?" If the biracial person's professed identity is not validated by the stranger during the interaction, they usually follow up with another question: "But, what are you *really*?" In this case, Rockquemore (2006) described that there can be two outcomes for the biracial person: they may renegotiate their identity by explaining that they are "really" biracial, or there can be an "interactional rupture can take place in which no shared meaning can be agreed upon" (p. 155) This shows that the biracial's self-claimed identity can often be renegotiated during interactions based on others perceptions, "because individuals do not create and maintain an identity in isolation, others in their interactional context must support or validate their self-understanding as black, white, or biracial" (Rockquemore, 2006, p. 155).

Some mixed-race people may feel that they do not have a choice but to assume the racial identity perceived by others. As stated by a mixed Asian and White participant in Choudhry's study, "Everyone keeps mistaking me for being Asian, so I have to just go along with it. There's not much I can do" (2010, p. 145). Even if she self-identifies differently, the participant feels she must assume the identity labelled upon her by society. This is in line with some of the findings in Song's study on the racial identification of mixed-race siblings in Britain. Song (2010) gives an example of Asian and White siblings (John and Jane) who looked "racially disparate." John was very fair-skinned and identified as 100% British. Jane,

on the other hand, had a darker phenotype and black hair, and described herself as British and Asian. She reported times of feeling self-conscious in the white suburban neighbourhood where they grew up. While John benefitted from white privilege because he could "pass" as white, Jane experienced minority status and dealt with racism in school. Song (2010) writes, "Unlike Jane, whose claim to be English was regularly challenged, John's claim to being '100% British' was validated, as he looked white. Conversely, because John looked white, he would not easily be able to assert an Asian identity" (p. 273). However, Jane reported that others' perception made it such that she "gradually reinforced her sense that she was (at least partly) Asian, and correspondingly, she reported that this had made her feel 'more Indian,' and more able to see herself as a 'mixed person' who was both British and Asian" (p. 273). John and Jane's example demonstrates the role that physical appearance can play on one's identity and one's daily experiences of being racialized.

In another study, Song and Aspinall (2012) interviewed 65 mixed young individuals in Britain to see whether being misrecognized (i.e. self-identification not validated) by others mattered to them. You may recall Stonequist's theory of the marginal man doomed to suffer from internal conflicts because he has two looking-glass selves (how he self-identifies and what others perceive). Song and Aspinall's findings showed that mixed-race people do not necessarily experience racial misrecognition negatively. Out of the 65 participants, only 17 experienced being misrecognized in a bad way: "Those who felt misrecognized felt that a lack of validation of their asserted identity (which was of importance to them) was difficult and distressing. […] How others racially assigned them jarred with how they saw themselves, and this was a recurring concern in their day-to-day lives" (Song and Aspinall, 2012, p. 738). For example, 4 of the 17 participants reported that they were often seen as White but they personally did not see themselves this way. Even though they benefited from White Privilege because they could pass as White, "all four of these respondents reported that such misrecognition was especially difficult because their ties to their non-White side of the family were stronger than those with their White family members. Because they felt a very strong attachment to their minority backgrounds, scepticism about their minority ancestry was often painful" (Song and Aspinall, 2012, p. 740). Moreover, 15 repondents experienced misrecognition of their racial identity positively because they felt others understood their ambiguous looks as "exotic" and it was a "good conversation starter." Finally, 33 participants

felt indifferent to how others perceived them. For many of these respondents, race was seen as unimportant because they live in a multiethnic city like London, where mixing is very common, especially among middle-class Britons. Being British was more important for them than belonging to a particular racial group. The findings from this study show that there are various ways to experience racial misrecognition by others, and that it is not necessarily a negative experience, as was commonly believed. In the analysis section, we will explore whether or not our participants' self-claimed identification coincides with others' perception and what impacts this has on their identity.

Discrimination or rejection based on appearance may also affect mixed-race people's sense of identity and belonging to a group. Branscombe, Schmitt, and Harvey (1999) explored the ramifications of perceived discrimination amongst African-Americans. They showed that perceived discrimination by the dominant group could cause lower self-esteem, anxiety and depression. The author explains that associating oneself with the minority group after being rejected from the dominant group is a way of coping and procuring a sense of well being. In 2004, Herman also showed that mixed-race (Black and White, and Latino and White) youths face similar amounts of discrimination than their black and Latino monoracial counterparts. The more rejection and discrimination these youths faced from the majority group, the more likely they were to affiliate with their minority group and to explore this side of their heritage.

Morevover, mixed-race people can also be subject to racism and discrimination within their own families, if some family members have racial/ethnic biases (Bettez, 2010; Gonzales-Backen, 2013; Rattai, 2014). In Bettez's (2010) study on the epistemologies of belonging among mixed-race women, some of her participants were excluded and made to feel different by their relatives. Bettez explains that the sense of belonging that is implicitly associated with family may be experienced differently for mixed-race people. According to Bettez (2010):

> The concept of family is often invoked as the group with which each of us can find a sense of belonging. The complexity of interracial families disrupts the notion of instant familial affinity and understanding. Rather than belonging, mixed-race women can feel a sense of dissonance from one or both families and extended families. (p. 154)

This echoes with the experiences of mixed-blood Aboriginal participants in Manitoba in a study by Rattai (2014). Her participants reported feelings of not "fitting in" with some of their relatives. For example, a mixed German and Aboriginal participant reported not feeling fully

accepted by her German relatives. Another reported being called an "outcast" by her Native relatives at a family gathering. These experiences of not fitting in the family can be highly damaging to one's sense of identity. Being subjected to "racial authenticity" tests by members of their own ethnic or racial groups is also common for many mixed-race people. Gonzales-Backen (2013) explains what is a racial authenticity test:

> It can be likened to a racial validity check. […] For example, their cultural knowledge or ties to their country of origin may be tested by their monoethnic peers to see if they belong to the ethnic clique. Utimately, biethnic adolescents may be pressured by ethnic authenticity challenges to choose to identify with one ethnic group over the other or even to deny affiilation with one group altogether. (Gonzales-Backen, 2013, p. 100)

Rattai (2014), who herself is mixed-blood (German and Mohawk), shared her own experiences of people questioning her "Nativeness." She recalled some of her experiences while living and working in a reserve in Manitoba where the locals challenged her authenticity as a Native woman: "I was called a derogatory slang word for 'white woman.' I was shocked because, during my life, white people defined me as Native or at least non-White" (p.78). She also recalled times when her colleagues made jokes about Aborginals while in her presence. She described feeling alone and "othered" amongst her group of non-Aboriginal colleagues as well as by members of the First Nations community where she worked and lived. Rattai's example relates to the sense of "double marginalization." Which is the feeling of being marginalized or discriminated against from both sides of one's ethnic/racial background. In the present study, some of our participants' shared experiences with double-marginalization, which will be disussed in the analysis section of the thesis. In addition to what has been presented in this section, mixed-race Indigenous peoples lived experiences, and their identity choices are influenced by a set of additional factors that are not applicable to other mixed-race groups. We will discuss these factors in the next section.

1.3 Mixed Identity in an Indigenous Context

What makes the study of mixed Indigenous identity different from other mixed-race groups? In an interview (Rutherford, 2010) Bonita Lawrence summarizes the situation succinctly: "Everybody in Canada is intermarrying, but nobody else is losing their citizenship as a result.". Lawrence is referring to the loss of Indian status and band membership of Natives married to non-Natives. The complex colonial history, as well as Canada's criteria for legal

recognition of Indian status and the criteria for membership in their respective Native community, are added factors that make the study of mixed Indigenous identities distinctive to the experiences of other mixed-race groups. Mahtani (2014) further explains the differences:

> Indigenous mixed race people in Canada experience a different place in the Canadian polity in relation to the state than do mixed race people of non-Indigenous backgrounds, and here I include not only those individuals who identify as mixed race immigrants but also those who identify as mixed race people born in Canada. […] It is not just that mixed Indigenous people have to contend with legalized forms of discrimination that are drastically different from the discrimination faced by mixed-race people of immigrant backgrounds; it is also that the implications of this situation for community identity and for legal rights are compounded by mixed Indigenous people's lack of recognition by the state. (Mahtani, 2014, p. 55–56)

In addition to imposed legal notions of what it means to be Indian, Indigenous people must also contend with society's preconceived views, or what Lawrence (2004) calls "common-sense understandings" of how Indians are supposed to look and act, which is highly shaped by the media. These preconceived notions put pressure on all Aboriginals, but particularly on mixed and non-status Indians. Mahtani (2014) explains that "although all Aboriginal people are subject to artificially constructed identity categories that may have little to do with their actual heritage, Métis and nonstatus Aboriginal people are particularly likely to be seen as not sufficiently 'Indian' to fit romantic or legal notions of 'Indianness'" (Mahtani, 2014, p. 49). The "real Indian" is the clichéd Indian (dark skin, dark hair, savage or noble) often depicted in Hollywood movies, sold as Halloween costumes, and on sports teams' logos (e.g. Chicago Blackhawks, Cleveland Indians, etc.). In Lawrence's study on mixed-blood Aboriginals living in Toronto, her participants reported struggling with society's understanding, as well as their own internalized assumptions of the "authentic or real Indian." They endured what Lawrence calls:

> Ideological racism—a war of images is a constant issue to be reckoned with for urban mixed-blood native people. […] The response of many individuals has been to struggle to measure up to the images before them and to feel their identities tainted and diminished because they cannot be the "Indian" they feel they are supposed to be. (Lawrence, 2004, p. 135–136)

Moreover, when there is an absence of physical clues or cultural behaviour to determine if they are Indian or not, King (2003) explained that Natives often have to endure

questioning on their legal status, their blood quantum, whether they speak the language or not, their cultural knowledge, their place of residence (inside vs. outside the reserve), etc. These criteria are often used as measuring sticks for determining one's level of authentic "Nativeness." Below, Native author Kim Anderson (2000), describes her experience of being questioned on her Native identity:

> Some white people will question whether I am "really Native" because I didn't grow up on reserve or in a Native community; some will call attention to the fact that I am "only half"; others will interrogate me about my urban status. […] Once we are "only half," or once we become urbanized or non-language speakers, many non-Native people feel inclined to tell us that we no longer exist. We are no longer Natives. (Anderson, 2000, p. 26)

This type of questioning typically comes from non-Natives, but the received scepticism about authenticity can also derive from Natives that have internalized the racism. In "The Inconvenient Indian", King (2013) explains:

> We've done a reasonably good job of injuring ourselves without the help of Non-natives. For decades we've beaten each other up over who is the better Indian. Full-bloods versus mixed-bloods. Indians who live on reservations versus those of us who don't. Those of us who look Indian versus those of us who don't. We have been and continue to be brutal about these distinctions, a mutated strain of ethnocentricism. (King, 2013, p. 163-164)

The legal and romantic notions of what it means to be an Indian are a direct product of colonialism and the imposition of the Indian Act and how it managed to essentially construct Natives' and non-Natives' understanding of Native identity. As Lawrence (2004) explains, the Indian Act:

> Is much more than a body of laws that over a century has controlled every aspect of status Indian life. It provides a conceptual framework that has organized contemporary First Nations life in ways of thinking about Native identity. […] It has *produced* the subjects it purports to control, and which has therefore indelibly ordered how Native people think of things "Indian". (Lawrence, 2004, p. 25)

This section presents some of the additional factors that scholars who study mixed-race issues of non-Indigenous groups do not have to consider. In addition to the factors stated in section 1.2, mixed-Indigenous people must cope with the ramifications of a complex colonial past, with past and present discriminatory legal frameworks from the Canadian government,

with the implementation of membership and residency rules in their community, as well as society's romantic ideal of what it means to be a "real" Indian. These additional factors have a real impact on their lives, limiting access to their culture, and senses of identity and belonging. These are what make the study of mixed-race couples and mixed identities in an Indigenous context so different from other settings. The present study will observe whether or not some of the factors presented here are manifested in our participants' narratives, and if so how they influence their sense of identity and belonging.

The second research question for this study is aimed at understanding if and how Mohawk culture and identity is transmitted and perpetuated in mixed-Mohawk families. More specifically, the question raised is which cultural practices or ways of life did their families transmit to our participants, and what do they consider important to transmit to subsequent generations? The following section presents some of the literature that is relevant in helping us answer this question.

2. The Transmission of Culture and Identity in Mixed-Race Couples

The birth of a child from a mixed-race union typically elicits negotiations from the partners over the types of cultural identity markers they will transmit to their children. The parents must make decisions on which language(s) to teach, which religion(s) to follow, and what values and traditions to keep up -all of which are believed to be important choices that will affect their child's identity and future. In the UK, Caballero and Puthussery (2008) studied the different approaches used by mixed-race couples to bring up their children. The "individual approach" is one that encourages children to define their identity beyond race, ethnicity or faith, and to explore other aspects of their identity. Children are encouraged to be "cosmopolitan," and "develop and be true to the potential and abilities that lie within themselves" (p. 23). With the "mix approach," children are brought up to explore and be engaged in both or all of their different ethnic/racial backgrounds. In this approach, mixedness is understood as an "an identity in and of itself" (p. 23). Finally, parents who use the "single approach" put emphasis and promote a sense of belonging on only one part of the child's heritage.

In Montreal Quebec, Meintel conducted research on couples'aspirations for their children's identity and their parenting practices. The first study completed in 1980/1990 with first-generation immigrant parents was compared to another study completed in 2000 with second-generation parents, some of whom were in mixed couples (Meintel and Kahn, 2005). The results from this comparison revealed that first-generation immigrant parents were more inclined to impose or instill cultural narratives, identities, and values in their children. Second-generation immigrants that were in mixed-race couples, tended to have more pluralistic approaches to the transmission of cultural knowledge to their children and encouraged diversity. These parents believed that their role was to expose their children to a range of cultural markers that they could choose from when they get older.

Recently, Song and O'Neill Gutierrez (2015) explored the parenting practice of mixed-race people with their own children. The authors were interested in exploring multiracial couples' "attitudes, practices, and aspirations in relation to their children" (p. 682). Much like the second-generation immigrants in Meintel's research, multiracial parents in Song and O'Neill Gutierrez's study generally engaged in parenting practices that encourage what the authors call a "cosmopolitan ethos," one that values openness, tolerance and cultural diversity. The authors described these mixed-race parents' practices as aiming "to provide a range of information and tools for learning within the home for their children, to access how and when they wished, rather than manufacturing and imposing cultural or ethnic narratives upon them" (Song and O'Neill Gutierrez, 2015, p. 694). Many of the mixed-race parents in Song and O'Neill Gutierrez's study did, however, express concerns about ethnic and racial "dilution," and cultural loss. As reported by the authors, some parents admitted to having "anxiety or helplessness around the perceived inevitability of loss through dilution, [while] others were more proactive about countering dilution by deliberately and creatively reinforcing their children's connections to their racial and ethnic heritages" (Song and O'Neill Gutierrez, 2015, p. 684). The authors looked at the various modes of transmitting culture to try to counter "dilution" (i.e. traditional food, cultural activities, language skills, reading books, trips, and talking about their own childhoods)). Moreover, they noted the use of new modes of communication technologies, such as apps and social media, that their children can use to learn about their culture and connect with their extended family members.

In fact, the extended family is believed to contribute in important ways to the transmission of culture to the child. In particular, many authors have demonstrated the important role that grandparents play in the transmission of cultural knowledge, language and family history to the child (Leblanc, 2001; Caballero et al., 2008; Le Gall and Meintel, 2011; Song and O'Neill Gutierrez, 2015). For example, Leblanc (2001) observed that the Armenian extended family, particularly the grandparents played a fundamental role in the transmission of the Armenian culture, language, and family history. In the research by Meintel on the transmission of culture and identity in mixed-race couples in Quebec, the grandparents who babysat regularly had an important influence on the transmission of language (Meintel and Le Gall, 2015). As stated by the authors, "nearly all the grandparents interacted with the child in a language other than English and French" (Le Gall and Meintel, 2015, p. 121).

In Native communities, Garrett and Walkingstick Garrett (1994) observed that elders are honoured and their wisdom is cherished. Moreover, grandparents are often partners with the parents in the rearing of children and the transmission of culture. While referring to child-rearing practices in Native American families, they state:

> Elders have always played a vital role in the continuance of tribal community by functioning as parent, teacher, community leader and a spiritual guide. Traditionally, the primary responsibility of grandparents is to rear children and that of the parents is to provide economic support. The Native American Indian family is based on a multigenerational support system of interdependence that provides cultural continuity for all. (Garrett and Walking StickGarrett, 1994, p.136)

For many mixed-race couples in Meintel's study, the choice to reside in close proximity to their extended families was a conscious decision: "le choix résidentiel repose sur la proximité spatiale de la famille d'origine, laquelle favorise naturellement des contacts frequents" (Meintel and Le Gall, 2015, p. 112) Frequent physical contact with the extended family inevitably faciliates exposure to cultural markers. Meintel and Le Gall (2015) showed that when the family lives abroad, mixed-race couples often make efforts to keep transnational ties with the relatives in the "motherland" using various strategies such as telephone calls, e-mail, and other forms of technology. Moreover, trips to the motherland (when finances permit) allow for physical contact and the strengthening of familial ties with grandparents and relatives in the home country. Motives for maintaining transnational ties were in part to

expose the children to their immigrant parents' culture. Moreover, parents want to foster a sense of belonging to the immigrant parent's family, heritage, and country. They want to share their family history and to instill strong family values in their children.

Mixed-race couples' choice of what cultural markers to transmit has been the object of several studies. The following sections discuss some of the findings from past research on the transmission of language, naming practices, as well as the transmission of religion in mixed-race couples. Typically, the first language transmitted to a mixed-race child by parents is the one that is officially used in the country of residence and at school. Parents may try to transmit their native language at home, but it is rarely fully mastered by the child. Frequent contact with extended family members who speak the language can facilitate the learning process. As Leblanc (2001) points out: "La pratique de la langue arménienne trouve tout son sens à travers la relation avec les grands-parents arméniens. Pour plusieurs, parler arménien avec leur grands-parents a été une porte d'entrée à leur relation car c'est souvent la seule langue que ceux-ci maîtrisent vraiment" (Leblanc, 2001, p. 91). Parents may also choose to send their children to language immersion schools, and Leblanc's (2001) mentions that most participants learned to speak Armenian by attending Armenian language school. Speaking Armenian facilitated more meaningful relationships with the family on the Armenian side and allowed them to have a greater appreciation for their Armenian heritage and community. Only one respondent did not attend Armenian school and did not speak Armenian at all. She mentioned that she wished she attended this school as she would most likely associate to a greater extent with her Armenian heritage. Moreover, Choudhry's participants who spoke both English and the Asian language reported feeling as though they have more choice over their ethnic identity. For participants in Chouhdry's study being able to speak the language was a crucial component to feel a part of the culture. As stated by Choudhry (2010), "A participant who was unable to speak the Asian language or understand its nuances, for example, was thought to be less able to adopt an Asian Identity" (Chouhdry, 2010, p.142).

The practice of naming a mixed-race child is also typically subject to negotiations between the parents. The names can either reflect an indivdualized taste or a collective affiliation to family, race, ethinicity or faith (Caballero and Edwards, 2008). As a given name can say a lot about which culture the parents would like the child to identify with, it can also become a source of conflict between the couple and/or the extended family members. As

explained by Caballero and Edwards (2008): "Bestowing a name signifying collective affiliation, may say something about favouring a particular side of their child's family, racial, ethnic or religious heritage, and create dilemmas between them or difficulties with wider family" (p. 41). Authors have looked at the various naming strategies depending on the couples' identity projects for the child. Some parents choose to give their children "culturally neutral" names that are common in the dominant society as a way of avoiding the imposition of ethnic or religious identity on them and reducing the chances of them being marked as different in the dominant society. Varro (2003) calls these culturally neutral names, "passe-partout or chameleon" first names (e.g. Vanessa, Melissa, John, etc). In Meintel and Le Gall(2015), most of the mixed-race couples chose names that would reflect both of their heritages—for example, Julien (Francophone first name), and a chinese surname. Other parents may purposely choose an ethnic first name to highlight the immigrant parents' heritage.

However, religious or "ethnically charged" names may increase the risk of prejudice, depending on where the individual lives. For example, Figlio argued that "distinctively African-American personal names (such as Shanice or DeShawn) or "low-status" names may lead teachers to have less expectations of a child's attainment, and thus lower educational outcomes" (as cited in Caballero and Edwards, 2008). Le Gall (2003) mentioned that in Haitian, African, and Muslim cultures, the first name is almost always chosen by the father and usually reflects an ethnic or religious identity. When the child does not associate with their distinctively ethnic or his culturally neutral name, they may decide to change it when they mature. For example, some participants in Mahtani's study (2014) changed their "culturally neutral" name upon reaching adulthood to emphasize their ethnic heritage. In other cases, parents may also choose to give the child a first and middle name to include both cultures. In Leblanc's study, only two participants out of fourteen had first and middle names that were francophone and Armenian. The other participants only had francophone first names. However, when asked how they felt about giving their own children an Armenian first name, the general consensus was that they would give their children a francophone first name, and many would give them an Armenian middle name in order to pay homage to that side of their heritage. Regardless of the choice they make, it is certain that the process of naming a child of mixed origins is often subject to careful thought and consideration on behalf of the parents.

The transmission of religion is another topic that is generally up for debate in a mixed couple. Cassan (2008) looked at the transmission of religious and cultural markers among mixed Maghrebian-Quebecker and Islamic-Christian couples in Montreal. Five out of ten of her participants transmitted the Muslim faith to their children, and the other five did not transmit any religion. The parents of Muslim faith were adamant about the ritual of circumcision, even if they were not religious themselves; it was considered an aspect of culture and not necessarily an act of faith. Most of the mixed couples in Meintel's research study did not practice or practiced only a little of their respective religions (Le Gall and Meintel, 2014). Nonetheless, the vast majority wanted their children to have access to one or both parents' religion. For these families, the religious festivities (Christmas, Easter, Aid, Ramadan) were understood as privileged occasions to get together with extended families, as well as opportunities for children to learn about different facets of their culture (meal preparations, traditions, language, etc).

In this section, I have given an overview of some of the parenting practices of mixed race couples in regards to the transmission of cultural identity. While the parenting practices may help influence the identity choices of mixed children, the outcome will ultimately be for him to decide. As Katz (1996) described:

> parenting is fundamentally important in the early development of identity. The role of parents is subtle but powerful. The family's role does not equal to a gun shooting in a predetermined direction. They are more like authors who write the first chapter of a book, leaving the children to write the rest of the story. They set the scene for later development which may constantly refer back to them, but they do not determine the story. (Katz, 1996, p. 181)

The above-mentionned literature on the transmission of identity and culture in mixed couples does not explore what children actually do with the cultural identity markers they inherit from their parents and what impacts they have on their identity choices. Unterreiner (2015) explains:

> Le souhait parental de transmettre une identité a l'enfant ne correspond pas necessairement a ce qui est recu par ce dernier. D'une part, l'identité héritée par les enfants de couples mixtes, leur 'identité conférée' ne devient leur que s'ils se l'approprient. L'enfant de couple mixte est donc un acteur dans le processus de transmission, et non pas une eponge gorgée de ce qui lui a été transmis, dont

> l'identité serait la stricte reproduction de la volonté parentale. (Unterreiner, 2015, p.17-18)

With the help of our participants' narratives, the following study explores how they make sense of the cultural markers that were transmitted to them by their parents and families, how this affects their cultural identity, as well as what they wish to transmit to their own children.

3. Mixed-Indigenous Identity and Transmission of Culture: A Complex Interplay

In this study, we explore the concepts of mixed identity and the transmission of culture together, though they have traditionally been explored seperately. The interplay between transmission of culture and the identity choices of mixed Indigenous children is complexified by the lingering impacts of a colonial past. The impacts of colonialism and the implications of the Indian Act on Aboriginal families have greatly disrupted the transmission of cultural knowledge and traditional practices. For example, Canada's legacies of residential schools as well as the sixties scoop are major contributing factors that led to the erosion of the intergenerational transmission of Aboriginal languages.

From 1880 to 1996 in Canada, Aboriginal children were forcibly removed from their homes, sent to Residential Schools, and punished for speaking their ancestral language. The "sixties scoop" in the 1960s was also a critical period for Aboriginals in Canadian history. Native children were placed in the child welfare system and sent to non-Aboriginal foster homes, where access to their cultural practices and use of their mother tongue were not encouraged. Many children experienced psychological and physical trauma. Furthermore, it should be emphasized that the transmission of Aboriginal culture has been traditionally relegated to matriarchs. As seen earlier in the thesis, the forced enfranchisement of Native women married to non-Native men (and the enfranchisement of their children) was part of the plan for assimilation. Thus, the removal of Mohawk women married to non-Native men from their Native community makes the transmission of culture to the following generations all the harder to achieve. By managing to break down Native families and forcing them to integrate into the dominant society, the transmission of Aboriginal culture was successfully disrupted for the generations that followed. Baloy (2011) explains how assimilation policies worked to deteriorate Aboriginal languages and culture.

> Disruptions in family and community life greatly damaged Native language transmission and devalued Aboriginal languages. As a result, many Aboriginal parents refrained from speaking their heritage languages to their children in efforts to boost their chances for success in mainstream society as well as to protect them from the shame and pain they themselves experienced in schools and everyday life (Baloy, 2011, p.518).

In 2011, the National Household Survey (NHS) reported that about 1 in 6 Aboriginal people (First Nations, Métis, Inuit) can converse in an Aboriginal language. As it regards First Nations people only 1 in 5 individuals who identified as First Nations could speak their Native language. Moreover, 44.7 % of First Nations people with Indian status living on reserve stated being able to conduct a conversation in an Aboriginal language. This is more than three times the proportion of 14.1% among First Nations people with registered Indian status living off reserve.[13]There are efforts being made in Aboriginal communities to revitalize the language with programs offered in the reserves (Baloy, 2011). However, for those living outside of the reservation, the access to these programs is limited in urban areas.

Moreover,"blood memory" continues to have an impact on people's lives. Lawrence describes "blood memory" as the collective memory of a colonial past that has been passed down intergenerationally in Aboriginal families, and which affects individuals' experiences and sense of identity. Lawrence (2004) explains:

> In looking at the histories of Native peoples in the Americas over the past five hundred years, it is probably safe to say that any experience defines them, it is that of indescribable and harrowing loss—of lands, of children, and of culture and identity. The violence of these losses has been manifested to a greater or lesser extent, in every Native family. (Lawrence, 2004, p. 119)

Tom Porter, an Indigenous cultural educator, spiritual leader and author of *And Grandma said…Iroquois teaching* (2008), wrote on the lingering personal impacts of colonialism: "The image is still there in my head, no Canadian or American man is kicking my butt. He's already inside here where I can't get him out" (p. 36). As culture was disrupted and Aboriginal people are still healing from the trauma experienced in the past, the transmission of

[13]Statistics Canada. Issue: 2011003. Aboriginal Peoples and Languages – National Household Survey in Brief, National Household Survey year 2011. Last updated September 15, 2016. https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-011-x/99-011-x2011003_1-eng.cfm (accessed November 2016).

cultural identity is not as linear as they may be in other contexts. The two research questions posed by the present study must be considered within the context of the above-mentionned counfounding factors, as well as political and historical contexts, in order that we acquire an in-depth understanding of how mixed identities arise and how culture is transmitted.

CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

1. Qualitative Methodology and Factors to Consider

In her article "Back to the Drawing Board: Methodological Issues in Research on Multiracial People," Root (1992) argues that when studying mixed-race people qualitative research offers more flexibility for gaining richer and more in-depth understanding of their experiences, as well as the context being studied. It is for this reason that qualitative research methods were chosen to address the following two research questions:

1) What are some of the factors that influence Kahnawà:ke Mixed Mohawk women's sense of identity and belonging to the community?

2) Which cultural practices or ways of life did their families transmit to our participants and what do they consider important to transmit to subsequent generations?

Recall from the literature review that most contemporary studies in Quebec have relied on accounts from parents' perspectives to understand the identity choices of their mixed children. Moreover, we saw that mixed-race peoples' have had a history of being pathologized, marginalized, and silenced. Because others have often depicted the identities and experiences of mixed individuals, it was important for me to place the participants' voices at the centre of the discussion. According to Knight (2001), feminists affirm that giving marginalized groups an opportunity to voice their narratives is a way of empowering them, and a qualitative methodology allows a space where they can elaborate on their experiences and concerns. Furtheremore Kvale (1996) wrote that feminist approaches in qualitative research "have in common a focus on the everyday world of women, work with methods appropriate for understanding the very lives and situations of women, and understanding is a means for changing the conditions studied" (Kvale, 1996, p. 72).

There are a few factors that I had to consider prior to beginning the interview process, which had to do with my positionality as a researcher. In her 2000 book, *A Recognition of Being Reconstructing Native Womanhood*, Native author Kim Anderson comments on research conducted on Aboriginal populations by non-Aboriginals:

> Too often in the past, Native peoples have been misrepresented and appropriated on the page by outsiders. [...] Non-Native people have typically been considered the "experts" about our Indigenous lives, families and nations. [...] It is true that we are so accustomed to accepting the opinions, studies and research on Aboriginal people by non-Aboriginal people that we don't question this practice. Often this is seen as more valid, somehow, than the words of Aboriginal people. (Anderson, 2000, p. 40)

Anderson's statement resonated with me throughout the entirety of the project. I was mindful of my position as an outsider, and I can assure that I have done my best to accurately and objectively represent the point of views of my participants. Nevertheless, I do believe that to a certain exent, my outsider status may have been an advantage when conducting the interviews. I felt the participants were comfortable talking with me because I did not have any ties to the community. Kahnawà:ke is a small community, and I wondered if the participants would have talked to me as openly about their experiences and concerns with the membership issue if I were someone from the inside. I believe my experience as an outsider is in line with Trice (1970), who lists a series of pros and cons of having the role of an outsider while conducting research. Amongst the advantages Trice states, "'Outsideness' seems to stimulate more uninhibited response from data-bearers, since the 'inside' threat of transmittal to others in the organization is less with an outsider. However, this advantage places an extraordinary burden on the researcher to maintain strict confidence regarding all information imparted" (Trice, 1970, p. 80).

Because of the sensitive nature of the subject of my thesis and the political aspects involved, I was extra cautious with the information divulged to me. It was important for me to gain my participants' trust. I began and ended every interview by briefing them on my motives for carrying out this research, and what I intended to do with the results. All participants signed a consent form (see Appendix A) that explained what the research project was about and their right to withdraw from the study at any time. I preserved a strict level of confidentiality with the information that was collected during the interviews, and all the participants' names have been changed to pseudonyms to ensure their anonymity.

Another factor that could potentially influence the outcome of the research process is my position as a mixed-race woman. I believe the participants felt that I could relate on some level to their experiences because I am mixed. Mahtani (2014) argued that mixed-race people

share comparable experiences of being racialized, for example, being subjected to questions like "What are you?" Referring to her own research, Mahtani (2014) writes, "I discovered that my own mixed-race identity may have helped to diminish the fears of participants who were wary of my reasons for carrying out this study" (p. 83). My experience was similar to Mahtani's. For example, one participant asked about my background prior to commencing the interview. I told her I was mixed-race Chinese and French Canadian. I was surprised when she told me that it would have made a difference if I was a Caucasian researcher, she may not have agreed to the interview. I believe that the shared commonality of being mixed or non-White may have been slightly instrumental in terms of participants feeling understood about their experiences with racialization. However, Mahtani (2014) reminds that the shared commonality of being mixed with our participants does not mean that we necessarily share similar experiences. I took this into account during the interviews and while analyzing my results.

Finally, I decided to undertake this project in the summer of 2015, while the debate on the membership issue was divisive in the community. Some mixed couples had been sent eviction notices, there were protesters in front of some mixed couples homes; some vigilantes had even vandalized one home. All of these events were highly covered in the media. I had to take into consideration the fact that media influence may generate biased perspectives in the community. The media's influence cannot be denied. However, this being said, I stayed mindful throughout the study of the fact that the membership situation is very complex, and that I was exploring the issue from the vantage point of mixed-race participants only. There are many aspects to be taken into account, and this is not just a one-sided debate. I had to keep a critical perspective, stay objective, and be careful not to project my own opinions or personal biases during the interview process, nor while analyzing the results.

2. Participants, Criteria for Selection, and Recruitment Methods

All of the women who participated had to have a mother of Mohawk origin and a Non-Native father.[14] The primary reason I chose to specifically study these women is because Mohawks traditionally follow a matrilineal system of inheritance, and I am interested in the transmission of cultural identity. Due to difficulties experienced in the recruitment process, which will be explained in the next section, the number of participants was limited to six. However, I believe this small sample size was counterbalanced by the richness of the interviews.

Table 1 – Participants Demographic Information

Pseudonym	Age	Birth place	Current place of residence	Present relationship status	Number of children	Highest level of education completed
Rachel	Between **40-50**	**Inside** reserve	**Outside** reserve	Common-law	**2**	Graduate diploma
Josie	Between **50-60**	**Inside** reserve	**Outside** reserve	Married	**4**	High School
Kayla	Between **30-40**	**Inside** reserve	**Outside** reserve	Single	**1**	Bachelor's degree
Lisa	Between **60-70**	**Outside** reserve	**Inside** reserve	Single	**-**	Bachelor's degree
Vanessa	Between **30-40**	**Outside** reserve	**Inside** reserve	Common-law	**1**	High School
Sarah	Between **30-40**	**Outside** reserve	**Inside** reserve	Married	**1**	Bachelor's degree

[14] All of the participants' fathers are non-Aboriginal. The ethnic or racial origin of the father was not an important criterion since I was interested only in the transmission of the Mohawk culture.

I limited the study to participants over 30 years old as a way of meeting women with perhaps more life experience, and more knowledge of the Indian Act and the membership and residency laws. Participants born prior to Bill C-31 (1985) would most likely have more to say on this topic, as their mothers would have been affected by the gender discrimination in the Indian Act. Also, older participants could perhaps be more reflexive on questions of identity, as well as how their self-identification and sense of belonging was shaped and changed over time. At the time of the interviews, the participants' ages ranged from 30 to 62 years old, with a mean age of 44 years old. There were variations in the highest-level education obtained: one participant had a graduate degree (Rachel), two had high-school diplomas (Josie and Vanessa), and three had bachelor's degrees (Kayla, Lisa, Sarah). The participants were either raised in a two-parent home or by their single Mohawk mother and her extended family, and all participants had siblings from the same parents. With regards to to their relationship status, two participants were married (Josie and Sarah), two were common-law (Rachel and Vanessa) and two were single (Kayla and Lisa). As much as possible, I wanted to interview women who were mothers because I was interested in exploring if and how culture gets transmitted within mixed Mohawk families. Only one of the six participants did not have children, but she had nieces and nephews whom she considers to be like her own children, so I included her in the study. At the time of the study, half the participants resided in Kahnawà:ke, and the other half in the Montreal area.

Perhaps the most daunting task of the research project was to get ahold of participants who fit my criteria and who would agree to be interviewed. I met various setbacks during the recruitment process. First, I had no ties to anyone from Kahnawà:ke prior to commencing this project, which made it difficult to meet people from the community. Secondly, I decided to undertake this project, while the debate on the membership issue was being being played out in the media. It was a very divisive topic in Kahnawà:ke, and a fair number of people were quite upset. Due to the sensitive nature of my project, the ethics board at my university did not allow me to advertise for participants in Kahnawà:ke. Not knowing where to begin, I made contact with a number of Indigenous organizations in Montreal: The Montreal Native Friendship Center, Concordia Aboriginal Student Center, Native Women's Center, Project Autochtone de Quebec, and the First People's House at McGill—all to no avail. Moreover,

when I spoke to people about my project, I was often times met with the same reaction: "That's a sensitive topic. Good luck finding participants!" I believe what was being projected on the news had an influence and people were reluctant to talk to researchers, which made it very challenging for me to find participants or people who could refer me to potential participants.

It was by networking and word of mouth that I was eventually able to meet people from the community. I started advertising my project amongst friends, acquaintances, and relatives. I asked them to see if they knew people from the community whom I could get in touch with. With their help, I was introduced to two members of the community. Although they were unable to refer me to potential interviewees, the informants were helpful for giving me "insider knowledge" on the issues that were occurring in the community regarding the membership and residency laws. Moreover, they broadened my knowledge of Mohawk culture. I met both informants twice on separate occasions. On one occasion, I met one at a local coffee shop in Kahnawà:ke, and they gave me a tour of the town and provided me with in-depth information about the community. Meeting informants, which is important when conducting qualitative research (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984), gave me more information about the community. Informal conversations with these informants were instrumental in obtaining insight and different perspectives on the membership issue. I was also able to bounce some ideas off of them and to confirm information that I was unsure about.

In the midst of experiencing difficulties in the recruitment process, two of my acquaintances put me in contact with gatekeepers who could introduce me to participants. After explaining my project to the gatekeepers, they vouched for me to potential interviewees. Once the gatekeepers informed the potential participants that I would be in contact with them, I either sent an e-mail or telephoned them to explain my project and set a time and place to meet if they were interested in participating.

3. Methods of Data Collection

For this study, I used a triangulation approach, which is a combination of methods (informal conversations with informants, non-participatory observations, pre-interview activity, and interviews) to collect qualitative data. Researchers use triangulation to gain a thorough understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984).

Neuman (1997) explains triangulation by comparing it to the way surveyors measure a landscape: They "measure the distance between objects and survey the landscape by viewing points from different angles, a process called triangulation. They look at something from different angles or viewpoints to get a fix on its true position" (p. 141).

3.1 Non-Participant Observation

After meeting the informants and the gatekeepers I gained confidence and felt more comfortable going to Kahnawà:ke on my own to familiarize myself with community life. I went to Kahnawà:ke several times that year. For example, in February 2015, I heard about a presentation organized by the Kahnawà:ke women's group, called "Carrying our Roots to Empowerment" (CORE). The presentation was given inside one of the schools in the community. The topic of the presentation was a historical look at Kahnawà:ke membership. The presenters were influential members of the community. Attending part of the meeting was useful beause it allowed me to gain some insight and understanding of the impacts of colonialism on the present-day issue of membership in Kahnawà:ke. Such a history has structured the debate on membership in the community. The presentation shed relevance to what Simpson (2014) has discussed: "The territorial history of the Mohawk nation shapes the central question of membership. […] The concern over the loss of territory and the loss of jurisdictional authority that motivate the membership debate" (p. 63) It also allowed me to hear the perspectives of respected leaders in the community on the debate. I actively listened and silently observed what was being presented.

3.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

Root (1992) explains the two types of interviewing styles typically used in qualitative research: "Qualitative methodologies that lend themselves to studying multiracial people include semistructured interviews, in which general questions and topics are explored, and structured interviews, in which specific questions are asked" (p. 186). For this project, I chose semi-structured interviews. Kvale (1996) explains that the semi-structured interview "has a sequence of themes to be covered, as well as suggested questions. Yet at the same time, there is an openness to changes of sequence and forms of questions in order to follow up the answers given and the stories told by the subjects" (p. 124). Overall, semi-structured

interviews allow for more detailed responses from participants. They provide the flexibility to discuss events that have happened in the past, which is helpful when studying mixed individuals because their experiences are often shaped by events that happened in their childhood or adolescence. In order to test the validity of the questions in the interview guide, a pilot test was conducted with one of my informant's sisters at the informants' house. She is a Mohawk woman from Kahnawà:ke, but she does not fit the criteria for participation in the study. This trial run was meant to identifiy any potential problems with the interview guide. She was able give me feedback on my questions and provide useful advice. I asked her if my questions, were clear, ambiguous, or necessary, and if she had any suggestions for other questions that I could ask. I recorded the time it took for her to complete the interview, which was almost two hours. This pilot interview gave me valuable insight for me to re-assess my interview guide, to change, add, and discard questions.

Before starting every interview, I asked the participants to complete a demographic form (see Appendix B) with standard background information on my participant and their parents. After the demographic form was completed, the participants were prompted to complete a pre-interview activity, a family-tree (see Appendix C). I explained that "the family tree will allow me to better understand who is who in your family. It will allow me to follow more easily when you refer to a specific person in your family." I kept the family tree in front of me during the entirety of the interview and referred back to it when participants spoke of specific family members. Ellis, Amjad, and Deng (2011) wrote on the benefits of using pre-interview activities to help participants recall and reflect on past events before an interview. The authors explain that pre-interview activities can take many forms, such as "drawings, diagrams, various lists, timelimes, or schedules that participants complete prior to the interview" (p. 62). Pre-interview activities also help participants to start thinking about their experiences and they can facilitate comfortable conversations. In this case, the demographic questionnaire and the family tree were helpful because they allowed me to put into context, focus, and follow without having to interrupt the participants in their narratives. Active listening and demonstrating a genuine willingness to learn about the participants' family history set the tone for the interviews. As a result, an atmosphere of trust and respect was established.

Once the demographic form and the family tree were completed, I explained the format of the interview. The interview questionnaire was used as a guide, but the questions were flexible (see Appendix D). It was divided into three main sections: their parent's story, their childhood memories with family and friends, and the transmission of culture (what they inherited and what they wished to transmit to their children). I finished all the interviews with questions on their thoughts about the membership issue, but I did not explicitly tell them this at the beginning of the interview in order to avoid them constructing their answers ahead of time. The topics chosen for the interviews were based on the the literature review on the factors that are said to affect the identity choices of mixed individuals (geographical location, parental influence, extended family relations, discrimination, appearance, etc.), as well as the transmission of culture in mixed couples (naming, holidays and family events, religion and spirituality, meal preparations, language, etc.). Moreover, I asked participants if they could think of any additional factors that were not put forth by the research that may have affected their sense of identity and belonging, as well as other cultural aspects I did not list that were transmitted to them and which ones they felt were most important to transmit to their own children. The interviews were conducted from June 9 to September 27, 2015. The duration of the interviews ranged between 1h40 to 2h35 minutes. Each interview was tape-recorded to ensure accuracy. The interviews took place at a time and location that was convenient for participants. The participants did not receive renumeration for their participation in this research.

3.3 Limitations

As stated above, finding individuals to participate was challenging. The process of recruitment took almost a year to complete, which leghtened the duration of the project. I would have preferred to interview more subjects, but timing and financial limititations did not allow for more participants. However, considering the richness of the interviews completed, I do not believe that the small sample size is a major limitation. All participants were highly eloquent and expressive in their way of narrating their individual story. Storytelling and oral tradition are typical in Aboriginal societies and the women were engaging while recounting their stories. They shared vivid and descriptive examples from their childhood and adulthood. As a result, every interview is of high quality and rich in information.

3.4 Data Analysis

The six interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The narrative findings were organized thematically with a coding scheme using different colours. The quotes that were pertinent in terms of research questions and emergent themes were highlighted with the appropriate colour, and then extracted and placed under the appropriate category. In analyzing the information, I looked for similarities in experiences and whether there were patterns or themes that could be developed, as well any other emerging themes that would be valuable for the study.

Recall that one of the main arguments for the maintenance of the Kahnawà:ke membership and residency law is the preservation of the identity and culture of their people. In an interview with the *Montreal Gazette* (May 3rd, 2015), a spokesperson for the Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke, provided perspective on the matter, "The movement to enforce the residency law has wide support in the community as a means to prevent assimilation and protect the community's identity and land." Is the transmission of culture disrupted in mixed Mohawk families and are assimilation and the loss of cultural identity for mixed children inevitable when mixed couples reside together? To provide answers for this question, the following study explored what is the cultural identity of Mixed-Mohawks and what are the factors that mitigate or facilitate their sense of identity and belonging. Moreover, we try to understand if and how Mohawk culture is kept alive and preserved in mixed Mohawk families. In the next two chapters, I present some of the narrative findings from the interviews with the participants. The data was organized thematically and sub-thematically.

CHAPTER 4 - CULTURAL IDENTITY AND BELONGING: FACTORS OF INFLUENCE

1. Cultural Identity and Belonging: In Constant Evolution

> *It's so weird because I can see the connections, how these two families are connected through my parents, but at the same time this is really who I am. […] I honor my non-Native side of my family, but I really am my mom's child, my mom's daughter. I am Mohawk and that can't be taken away from me, that can't be removed from you no matter what. It's engrained in me.*
>
> (Lisa)

The above excerpt is a good general description of the participants' current sense of cultural identity and belonging. All participants described being proud of their mixed heritage, but they identified more with their Mohawk culture. As we will see, their sense of identity and belonging developed and strengthened over time. It transformed in the course of various critical events—some associated with the life cycle, such as the death of a loved one or the birth of a child, and others associated with political life (as we will see with the Oka crisis). Moreover, various factors, described in this chapter, have worked to either facilitate or mitigate their sense of identity and belonging over time. Today, these women do not let themselves be defined by outside forces such as federal or local legislation, or by other peoples' opinions of who they think they are or should be. Rather, the participants take a position and are committed to self-actualizing who *they* think they are, which is strong Mohawk women. For example, Sarah and Josie felt ostracized by both Natives and non-Natives when they were young. Caught in the middle, they described how hard it was for them to find a sense of belonging while growing up. In the excerpts below, they explain how they have dealt with these questions over the years:

> *Now, I just have to think about myself and who I think I am. You got to do it inside. No one is really going to help you, they will push and pull and have a tug of war with who you are. But you got to do it and find your place. At this point, I feel it makes me a strong person to have chosen the way I approach it.*

> *I've taken a lot of introspection, a lot of time to think about it […] how to feel good about myself. Having gone through everything I've been through, I think it makes me a stronger person to have chosen the way I approach it.* (Sarah)

> *At a time, I was trying to find my place as a mixed Native person. So I would find it hard because of the racism and the difference. I would try a bit harder, when I was in town I would try to act more Mohawk than I would normally. So, ya, you can say I was compromising a bit who I am to feel more apart of the group. I eventually found my place in life. When I talk to people either Native or non-Native I am who I am and that's it.* (Josie)

Moreover, Kayla was heavily bullied during her childhood and adolescence on the reserve, as well as outside the community, because she was "different." She described how these negative childhood experiences have contributed to shaping her identity, self worth, and her general outlook on life:

> *In a weird way, I kind of think it (racism) strengthened my sense of belonging. I really think it strengthened my sense of (Mohawk) identity in the long-term because I reached a point, I think having experience racism on both ends I came to this point that I am going to be a direct representation of my community, whether my community wants me or not. […] I reached this point I think when I was in college; it came in little waves.* (Kayla)

Kayla was also made aware of her differences early on in her life. She explained that having experienced such hardship is what made her decide to take it upon herself to assume her Mohawk culture and strengthen this side of her cultural identity when she matured. Today, Kayla identifies fully with the Mohawk culture. She has moved past her feelings of anger and hurt, choosing not to be overpowered and defined by her childhood experiences with racism. As an adult and now a mother herself, she understands that racism is based on ignorance and chooses not to perpetuate negative behaviours and attitudes. Instead, she worked hard on what she could do to better herself. She carved out her own space and developed her sense of identity and self-acceptance. She explained how she views her identity and sense of belonging today:

> *Now, I belong where I am—wherever I am, that's where I most belong. I don't feel that I am looking for an answer outside anymore. I'm just like I'm here. You have to build your own sanctuary, you build your own space. Sometimes it takes a really long time to do.* (Kayla)

Another example is Rachel, who as a young child witnessed her mother go through hurtful experiences with membership and residency issues. Having had to grow up outside of

the reservation, Rachel described feeling isolated from her community and experienced feelings of not belonging to the community when she was younger:

> *I know that when I went to the community, I didn't feel part of it as a young person. I don't know why. I mean I was there for my first three years and I lived in a mostly Mohawk household. After that we visited very often. […] I always felt sad and rejected for sure. There's a part of me that always felt not wanted by the community [Kahnawà:ke] but I felt very loved by my family. […] So I don't know where that feeling came from, that I didn't belong. […] I don't think I felt different, but I felt apart. I felt like I wasn't able to be with them [extended family] maybe. I think that's what it was. I think it was living outside of the community that made me feel less a part of it.* (Rachel)

Rachel's sense of belonging and feelings of associating more to her Mohawk roots transformed and became stronger upon getting involved in First Nations organizations in university, where she joined hands with other Mohawks and Native people to create art:

> *In university is when I really felt Native again. I used to wear the bone chokers and I had a Mohawk at that time. I shaved the sides of my head and left the other side long. […] We started an art group for First Nations. Mostly, we started it because we were graduating and we wanted to keep making art work, we wanted people to critique it and to look at it. We started making these shows and I don't know, it was the right timing, people started getting interested in these shows. The shows travelled and we were invited to talk about the shows and we were called curators. [Laughs] Then, I started feeling like, well this is my commmunity, these Native artists accross the country is my real community. Now, when I make my work, those are the peoples' opinion that I care about. Whether they think it's good.* (Rachel)

Seeing her mother go through negative experiences with the membership issue and her own childhood feelings of not belonging in the community encouraged her to explore and form an identity through her art work and by being involved in social justice issues that are close to her heart. Today, she describes that her political outlook and world views are the most defining part of her Mohawk identity. She has a rich sense of identity and the meaning of belonging to a community goes beyond Kahnawà:ke:

> *I feel that my political outlook, my questioning, criticizing, and critiquing of history is part of my Mohawk identity. That's almost what I think is the essence of it. It's the understanding that we are a colonized, oppressed group. More than anything, more than the food, the clothes, the language, you know?* (Rachel)

The overt practice of aspects of Mohawk culture (traditional food, language, spirituality, etc.), which we will describe in more detail in chapter 5, worked to reinforce the participants' cultural knowledge and sense of identity. However, being a Mohawk is not limited to simply practicing specific cultural markers; it is much more profound than that. In this chapter, some of the important factors that either mitigated or facilitated the participants' sense of identity and belonging are presented. The six major themes discussed were the impacts of geographical location, experiences with physical appearance and discrimination, the Oka crisis, the importance of the maternal extended family, the positive influence of parents and grandparents, and the important role accorded to women in Mohawk culture.[15]

2. The Impacts of Geographical Location

> *It's such an odd issue [membership] because there's so many people that don't realize what it entails, until it happens to them.*
>
> (Sarah)

Yuval-Davis (2006) explains that the sense of belonging is tied to feelings of security, and is "about emotional attachment, about feeling 'at home'" (p. 197). The consensus amongst all six participants is that the territory of Kahnawà:ke offers an affective, relational, and environmental sense of belonging to their mother's land, family, history, and culture. Indeed, it is a familiar location that all the women, even those who do not currently live on the reserve, repeatedly referred to as "home." For example, Rachel was born in Kahnawà:ke, but she grew up outside of the reserve. Even though her family was "excluded" from the community because of the membership law, she expressed her love for Kahnawà:ke, saying, "it really feels like my home, it was my first home." Lawrence's study on mixed-blood urban-

[15] The factors are not listed in any order of importance.

status Indians living in Toronto also showed that participants who did not grow up on their reserve described it as "home." As Lawrence explained:

> It is important to recognize that most of the individuals who see their reserves as "home" have not actually spent much time there. Nor do they plan to do so. […] Having a reserve to point to as a homeland, where one's family has been part of a web of relations within the community, anchors these individuals in profound ways as Native people, even if most of the actual connections they develop in their lives are within the urban Native community. (Lawrence, 2004, p. 196)

Leaving "home"

Three of the participants' mothers (Rachel's, Josie's, Sarah's) lost their membership and had to leave Kahnawà:ke, which they saw as a big sacrifice. While they regained Indian status with the federal government under Bill C-31, they did not meet the criteria to be reinstated for Kahnawà:ke membership. Their experience is in line with that described by Dickson-Gilmore:

> While these people were rejected by their community as "Mohawks," they appear to have continued to be accepted by the Canadian state as "Indians," […] those persons excluded from Kahnawà:ke because they fail to meet Mohawk standards of citizenship may find their "Indianness" reduced to little more than a bureaucratic category. If that "Indianness" is linked with the ability to practice their Mohawk culture by living within it, the loss of Mohawk citizenship and its concomitant rights of residence in Kahnawà:ke may render the ability to live both as a Mohawk and an "Indian" that much more challenging. (Dickson-Gilmore, 1999, p. 38)

Below are some participants' narratives of their parents' situation with membership and residential issues being met with demeaning attitudes and harsh words. Rachel recalled some of the conversations she had with her parents about membership:

> *After my parents got married, my mother was not able to live in Kahnawà:ke anymore. She was constantly lobbying to get back on the membership list and to be reinstated. Especially after bill C-31 was passed. We talked about that a lot. […] My mother was really hopeful, she was always so hopeful. I remember a few things, though; I remember her saying that they are developing the criteria. But then when she would ask, "do we fit the criteria to get back on the membership list?" They [Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke] would say: "we're just developing it."And then we would ask "when is it going to be developed?" It was just being pushed along all the time. I think she kept us sort of informed of that. Then one time, she said: "when are we going to be allowed on the band*

> *list?" They said, "When you kill your husband." It was awful, and ridiculous. Those are the kind of things that I remember. There was just this feeling that we were not allowed to live there, you know? And now I think I can easily place that blame and also that source at the band council.* (Rachel)

Cruel remarks such as these inflicted hurt and continue to burden Rachel's family. It has left the family with the impression of great injustice, exclusion, and even hopelessness for not being able to fulfill their mother's wish to live at "home" in the community she was born in.

Josie and Sarah's mothers also had negative experiences with membership. Sarah described her mother's point of view on the matter:

> *I've asked my mother, "if dad were to pass away, would you come back?" She said not really. "They don't want me there; I don't want to have to beg to live somewhere." Because even though Canada gave her back her Indian status, Kahnawà:ke didn't give her back her membership. That's one of the hurtful things about it… literally, if you go to the membership office, they will ask you: "Is he dead or are you divorced? Because if not, you won't get your membership." My mom says, "why should who I love take away my rights?" It doesn't make any sense.* (Sarah)

Sarah's mother feels distanced and exluded from her community, using terms such as "them" and "us." While her mother still cannot reside in the community, Sarah married a Mohawk man from the community and returned to live on the reserve. Having witnessed what her mother went through with the membership issue, she admitted sometimes fearing for her own eviction as a mixed-race woman:

> *Although no one is threatening to evict me, because they are only doing it to complete non-Natives, I can't help but think, is there a next wave? It's like, okay, we got rid of those, now let's get rid of the mixed people. It's nerve-wracking.* (Sarah)

Having witnessed their parents go through upsetting experiences with membership and residential issues made our participants more aware and supportive of their mothers' cause. They all wish the membership law would change and be more inclusive. However, these negative experiences did not deter them from wanting to be a part of the community. For example, Sarah feels that membership is unfair, and she is often told she has no place being there, but we sense an obvious love for and attachement to her mother's community. Sarah wishes to raise her child on the territory for her to be in daily contact with her extended family and the Mohawk culture.

Choosing to Reside in Close Proximity: Châteauguay

According to the interviewees, it is very common for Mohawk families to reside in Châteaugay, the town located "right next door" to Kahnawà:ke (see figure 3 below). Châteauguay is where Rachel, Josie, and Sarah grew up. The three participants' parents choose to reside close to the reserve to be in proximity with their extended family in Kahnawà:ke. Josie explained that her family moved many times because her mother never felt quite at "home" and she kept bringing them back to Kahnawà:ke. When Josie was ten years old, her parents finally decided to settle in Châteaugay:

> *I remember the first time when they were sending letters to the residents saying you're not Native and you have to leave. I was about 5 or 6 years old and then we moved to Lachine and visited Kahnawà:ke often. Then, probably like a year later we came back to Kahnawà:ke to live. By the time I was 8 or 9, they were sending out eviction letters to get rid of people again. So we left again. Then, I think around the time I was 9 or 10 years old, my parents rented a place in Châteaugay, which is 2 km away from Kahnawà:ke, and then we just stayed there and visited often. Being in Châteaugay, I guess she [mother] didn't feel the need to have to go back and live in Kahnawà:ke. Just maybe to avoid the trouble of being kicked out again. It was close and close enough to say that we could be together all the time, since it was the neighbouring town.* (Josie)

When Rachel was a toddler, her parents also moved the family to Châteauguay. They wanted to purchase a home, and they knew they could not own land or property in Kahnawà:ke because of the law. So they bought a house in Châteauguay and raised their children there. Rachel described how much her mother loved her community and strongly wished she could have stayed and raised her children back home with her family:

> *My feeling is that my mother longed to live in Kahnawà:ke. She missed her community very much. She never liked living in Châteaugay, and still doesn't. All her life she wished to go back. I think she finally gave up a couple years ago. But, my mom longed to be back home (Kahnawà:ke) all her adult life, all her married life.* (Rachel)

Rachel's mother felt isolated living in Châteauguay and fought for many years to regain her membership—all to no avail.

Growing up in Kahnawà:ke

The three other participants' parents (Kayla, Lisa, and Vanessa) were able stay and raise their children on the reserve because they married before the 1981 moratorium on mixed marriages. The participants who grew up on the reserve believe that living in the community made a difference in terms of being in contact with other Mohawks and their culture. When Vanessa was young, she worked at a job on the reserve that put her in daily contact with older members of the community. She says that being in contact with them on a regular basis allowed her to secure a sense of belonging to the community:

> *Growing up, I never felt mixed because I grew up on the reserve with my grandmother and my uncles. I always knew everybody because I worked there. So everywhere I go, I know all the old timers and all the mothers. I always just knew everybody in town so I always just felt like I was at home. I never had an identity crisis or where I belong or who I was. That's what I always say to people, if I had lived out of town, I would never have felt accepted in the community because I was bullied. But having grown up in town, I was like oh well, whatever, I belong here.* (Vanessa)

Lisa also believes that living in Kahnawà:ke augmented her sense of belonging and her identity as a Mohawk because she was raised on the land and she was in contact with different aspects of the culture every day:

> *I was raised in the Mohawk tradition, and my parents taught us how to plant corn and beans for corn soup (traditional food). We weren't allowed to go swimming until the garden was hosed, cleaned and weeded; if we wanted food and cornbread for the winter we had to do that. It was drummed into us. We helped to plant and tend the garden we harvested. My mom taught us how to braid the corn to dry it. I was raised very traditional, and we lived closed to the earth—because of that I feel stronger now. Now suddenly everyone in the community is being traditional. I have an advantage about being taught things because we lived it. They were just there, and I don't need to doubt that.* (Lisa)

Although Kayla found it difficult growing up in Kahnawà:ke because she was bullied for being mixed race, she described the benefits of attending a school in the community that offered an outreach program for the youth to learn about different facets of their culture:

> *We would go on medicine walks and I did basket making and I just loved working with my hands. I remember making basket making and soap stone carving and beadwork classes. You know all the stuff when I was a kid, I loved making stuff and I would stay after school everyday and I would make stuff.* (Kayla)

Understandably, living outside of the community makes it more challenging to have daily contact with the culture and with Mohawk peers. For example, Vanessa is a mentor for adolescents in the community, many of whom are children of mixed parents who reside and attend school off the reserve. In the excerpt below, she describes her experience with working these youths. She believes these girls are at a disadvantage in terms of how much of their culture they can access:

> *As a sports mentor, I have girls that are half-Mohawk and who live in Châteaugay, and because they play sports in Kahnawà:ke, they are accepted in the community. But the half-Mohawks who don't play sports in Kahnawà:ke don't have that way of getting back into the community. It's like once you are out, other than hanging out with family that you have, there's not really any other ways for you to be involved in the community if you are not playing sports. It makes the struggle harder to keep those kids in touch with their culture if they have no way to be involved in that. (Vanessa)*

Indeed, many Mohawk children go to schools outside of Kahnawà:ke, in Lachine, Dorval, Châteaugay or Lasalle, which according to two of our participants, do very little to promote Aboriginal culture and history. Sarah expressed her thoughts on her experience of having to attend school outside of the community:

> *By kicking people out, they are ensuring that we end up having to go to white schools or Non-native schools, or whatever. They are ensuring that we are not able to preserve the culture and language. Either you let the families stay and ensure that their offspring go to school there and learn or what are you going to get? A bunch of adults coming back later trying to learn the language and customs when it's not that easy?* (Sarah)

Because of her experience, Sarah has volunteered outside of the community to speak at different schools to share the history of the Mohawk people with the youth.

> *I went and I explained our creation story and I explained our Wampum belts and I made sure to explain the two-row Wampum, two boats side by side and everything. I think that's good not only for the kids being taught outside of the reserve to have stuff like that but for the other kids to understand also. Having those presentations where someone comes to them and tells them who we really are and let their kids decide for themselves, versus what their parents are feeding them or what the media feed them. Especially when the kids are small, to get other kids to understand as well as those who are leaving the reserve and*

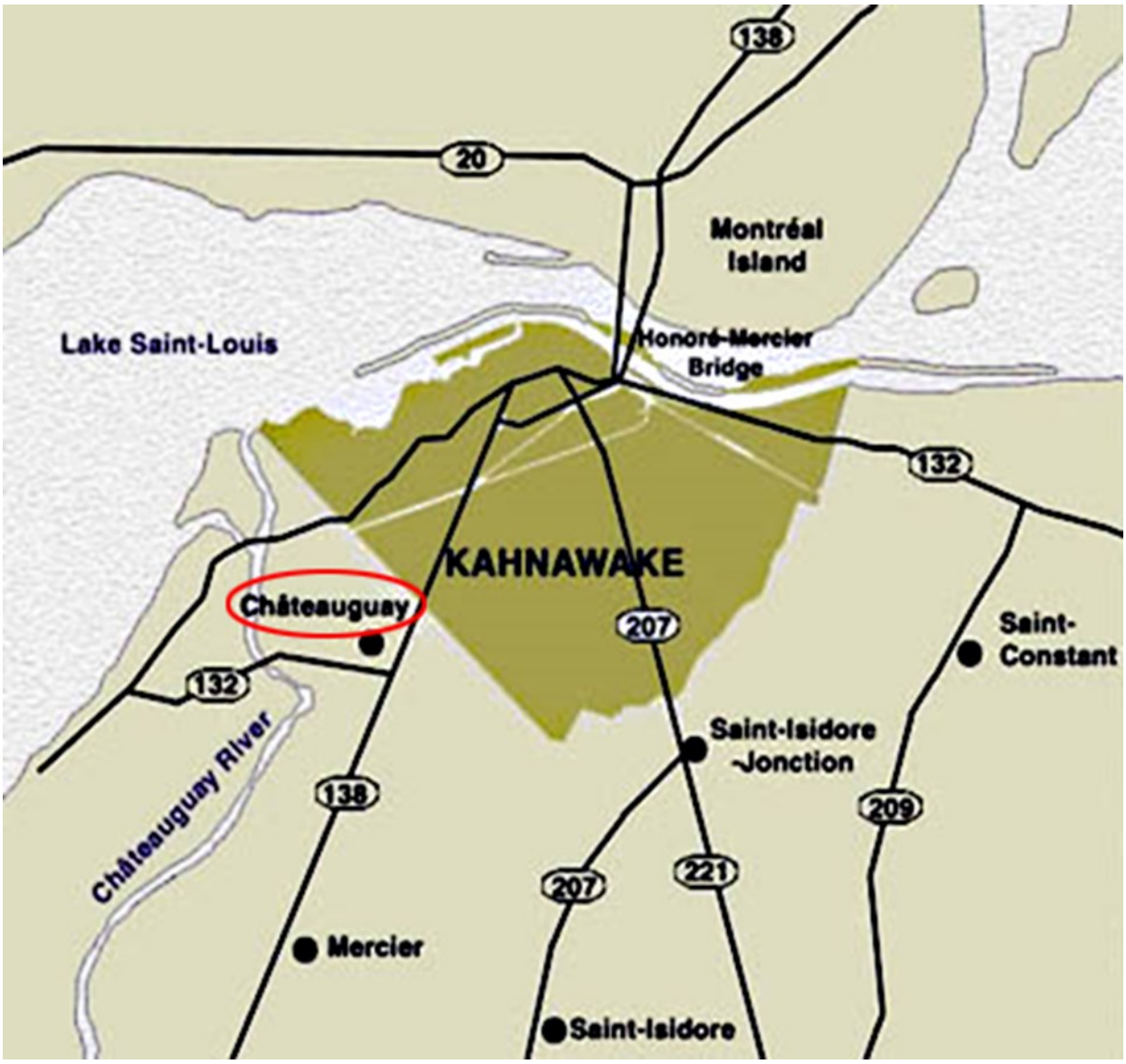
> *who don't have access to school on reserve to say hey, someone cares. Someone has come to share my culture.* (Sarah)

Living and attending school outside also reduces opportunities to be in contact with other Mohawk youths, which can create a sense of alienation and feelings of not belonging. For example, Rachel was very close to her Mohawk cousins who lived on the reserve, but she rergrets not having much opportunity to socialize with more Mohawks when she was young. As Rachel disclosed,

> *I didn't get to know everyone in town the way everyone else seems to know each other. Meaning that people who live in Kahnawà:ke all seem to know each other very well, right? And I don't and they know whose parents are whose and all that stuff. And I don't.* (Rachel)

Josie grew up in Châteauguay with her parents, but she spent most of her summers with her grandparents in Kahnawà:ke. She believes that living in town would have helped her feel more connected with her community when she was young. Although peers occasionally teased her because of her pale complexion, she expressed a desire to live in Kahnawà:ke if she had been given the choice. As Josie said, *"Even being picked on, I would still have stayed. It would have maybe helped me to feel more a part of the community."*

Figure 3 - Map of Kahnawà:ke



Source: http://www.kahnawakelonghouse.com/index.php?mid=7

3. Experiences with Physical Appearance and Discrimination

> *As a teenager, I kind of never fit anywhere. To the Natives I was a white girl and to the white people I was a "squaw." So, find your place.*
>
> (Josie)

As discussed in the literature review, stereotypical notions of what "authentic Indians" are supposed to look and act like are often used to quantify one's degree of Nativeness. The participants reported being questioned on a regular basis about their Native identity. For example, Vanessa shared her experiences with non-native people who questioned her identity.

> *I just find it ignorant that people have to look at you and be like, "what are you?" To put you in a category. Some people look at me and don't question who I am. But then other people are like, "you're not really Native, are you?" It has to be thrown in there. So I always found that kind of silly… like I always got to explain, "yeah, my mom's Native, my dad's not." I find it funny because you kind of have to justify your Native-ness. I heard a lot of Natives in Australia are having a lot of problems with the media and politicians going after them because they don't look Native enough. It's funny that people NEED to know that. I'm just like, what does it matter to you? Anywhere I am, they come to my work in Kahnawà:ke and they ask me that, or when I'm in the city… People in the city are even surprised that we live in houses. People come walking through in Kahnawà:ke and they are like there are houses here and a store! YUP! [laughs] It's funny.* (Vanessa)

Typical "Native features" described by our participants were dark phenotype, dark hair, and dark colored eyes. In the community, these physical features are valued because they are considered the more authentic traits. In the example below, Sarah describes comments from a conversation she had with a woman in the community who expressed sadness that her children have white physical features:

> *I was talking to this mixed-Mohawk woman who is married to a Mohawk and she said she's saddened that most of her kids have blonde hair. She internalized it. I can't get my head wrapped around that. My daughter is pale, she's got dark hair and dark eyes, but her skin tone is maybe a little touch darker than*

> *mine. Very little. I don't care… she could have came out purple. I wouldn't care. She's healthy, she's happy, and she's mine. I don't care what she looks like. To have this, like, oh well if you keep marrying out, our kids are going to look like this. I'm like you are using your kid as a meter of wrong? That's sad. I feel bad for those kids. What is she going to instil in them? They are not going to love themselves either. So that confuses me very much. It's crazy because she is mixed herself.* (Sarah)

Having Native features gives more credibility to one's claim of being Native, as well as an easier integration in the community. This is in line with the findings of Chouhdry, who wrote: "Often a key criterion for group membership is physical appearance" (p. 144). In Choudhry's study, 65% of all of her mixed-race participants believed that physical appearance had a significant influence on how they understand their own identity. Chouhdry's participants believed that having less noticeable physical differences allows for better integration within a group of peers. Moreover, people who do not look "Native" may be subject to questioning by skeptical non-Natives and Natives about their degree of "authentic Nativeness." The pressure to "look Native" was experienced by many participants, who were teased and bullied by peers in the community. Josie, for example, said she was often picked on when she young because of her pale complexion:

> *My eldest daughter is dark, and you see that she is Native by looking at her. My grandfather was so proud of her when she was born because he said she looked like his mother. [Laughs] So my granddaughter looks like my daughter and she's very dark and you can tell she's Native. If you look at me, a lot of people think I'm Italian. Like… I'm not White, but I don't have Native features as much as my daughter and granddaughter do. When I was in Kahnawà:ke, it was hard. I had a limited amount of friends, but the rest of the townspeople would say, "you're a Frenchman, you should leave, you should go!"* (Josie)

Lisa says she identifies as Mohawk first, and when people racially perceive her as white, it conflicts with her own self-identification. These frustrating experiences occurred regularly for Lisa while she was growing up in Kahnawà:ke.

> *I went to school in Kahnawà:ke in elementary and high school. Growing up in Kahnawà:ke is hard. We were reminded about having blue eyes regularly. I mean even now, I still have ignorant people that talk to me and say "how can I forget you with those blue eyes?" That's really hard to handle, you know. Depending on my mood, I would go, excuse me? And other times, I will just laugh it off.* (Lisa)

Double-Marginalization

The sense of "double" marginalization was described by our participants as feelings of being "othered" not only within their Native community, but also in the dominant White society. They were often accorded minority status outside of the community and they were considered not Native enough inside the community. Five of the participants' spoke of their experiences with feelings of not fitting into either group. They felt isolated from both sides, which made it difficult for the participants to find a place where they felt belonging. The examples by Kayla, Vanessa, and Lisa are good descriptions of what the women refer to as double-marginalization.

> *I went to elementary school on the reserve and it was not fun. It was horrible… I was ridiculed and picked on by lots of different kids. My early memories of Kahnawà:ke were not fun. In elementary, I got kicked out of class because I was jumped by three girls and I was defending myself. My sibling was trampled on a bus once and I got drowned in a pool one summer. There were lots of fistfights and name-calling and that kind of stuff…Then, when high school came around, I knew I wanted to go to school outside of the community. Some girls from Kahnawà:ke ended up going to the same school as me, but it was fine. I just kept to myself growing up. It was kind of bittersweet because I chose to go to this high school to get away from the negativity and the racism and all this stuff that I experienced in town, and when I went to this school, I was confronted with a completely different kind of racism, which I was so taken aback by. The freaking guidance counsellor at the time was horrible, she took me aside and said "Native girls have a reputation at this school, so don't get kicked out, don't get into any fights and don't' get pregnant or you'll be out." I was like 11 years old and I was the squeakiest cleanest kid ever. Then, I remember getting into a verbal altercation with a girl when I was in secondary three and she looked at me and said "Don't block the bridge." I also remember being called Pocahontas, and just like stupid remarks about cigarettes and growing up on the reservation. I had a friend who was not allowed to come to my house for the entire time that we were friends in high school because her mom was afraid and she thought that reserves were dirty and we lived like animals. So it was just weird because I was like…in my community I have zero acceptance. I'm trying to run away from that so then I go to the city to just try and blend in, and all of a sudden you're too Native. It was so frustrating.* (Kayla)

Vanessa and her brother do not have similar skin tones. Her brother has a pale complexion and she is darker. Their experiences with racism differed: Vanessa was teased within the

community as well as outside, whereas her brother could "pass" as white and was bullied only within the community.

> *My brother got bullied a lot by people in town for being mixed because he's the lighter one. He got bullied really bad by the people from town on the bus and going to school. He never got it at school, though, because we went to school out of town. I would get it both in town and outside because I was dark, so I would get recognized at school and get called a savage all the time, so I was like all right, that's what I am. My brother on the other hand, he would blend in at school. I would get called a half-breed on the bus and in Kahnawà:ke and then a savage at school. So it's like I got it double. The racism made me have thick skin.* (Vanessa)

Lisa also reported being ostracized within the reserve for looking "White" and ostracized outside of the reserve for being Native.

> *It's really difficult because over the past five years I'm coming to better terms with verbalizing my feelings, and that wasn't always the case. When you don't have the verbal tools to handle the crap that comes at you. For example: "Oh YOU'RE Mohawk? I'm darker than you are!" You know, that's really hard to handle. I've been marginalized in town, and in a way it's a continuation of the marginalization based on my skin colour in the mainstream. So I'm marginalized in the mainstream and then I'm marginalized in my own community. It's double. That has happened to me, and this is the first time that I ever am talking about it. To deal with that, I will work on that, but I have experienced that and so… it isn't easy. It's really difficult. You are taught to keep your feelings inside. You are taught to keep this information (mixed heritage) about yourself, sometimes it's safe and sometimes it's not. It becomes a way of life really.* (Lisa)

Without the appropriate resources available to cope with racism, many of the participants dealt with it on their own or with the support of their families. Although, the negative experiences with racism were very difficult for them while growing up, all the participants said that it has made them stronger in the long run, pushing them to accept who they are and make their space instead of being defeated. The feelings of not belonging have impacted their worldviews and belief systems as adults and the ways in which they want to raise their own children. One of the many remarkable examples of our participants' resilience in the face of such adversity was offered by Kayla:

> *Now the way I choose to live my life is I see things as they are, but I'll choose not to engage in it. I could be mad and be upset, but what's the point? I have nothing bad to say about anybody, that's the way I choose to live my life. I*

> *don't like negativity. I could be negative, but I choose not to be. I get very Zen about things, I think that's how I react to things now. So yeah, I create my own space, my kind of 'I still got this'. I'm not going to be defeated, you can't be. I carved out my own space. In Kahnawà:ke, we have this expression that says "you have a hard face," which means you're stubborn. I'm pretty stubborn with stuff, and I wasn't taught to recoil or surrender, I guess. If something wasn't going my way, I would just keep pushing.* (Kayla)

Despite people's opinions of her, she focuses on what she can do to better herself, to access and learn about her culture, and to transmit it to her daughter. Kayla's wish for her daughter is that she is spared the hardships and the bullying that she experienced as a child. I asked her if she would ever move back to the community and this was her response:

> *That is the million dollar question… I don't know. I have some very conflicting views on that. I could. It's my right, I have the right to live there. I haven't been removed from the band list and I don't live with a non-Native. It's more of a question of do I want to expose my daughter… I don't think the community is healed enough to bring her in. My mom was tough for my sister, and I know that I could do that for my daughter. But it doesn't have to be like that, it doesn't have to be crab in a bucket and everything is a fight. Ya, there are moments when you fight, but your whole life doesn't have to be a fight. That's what it was like growing up for me, you have to fight for your place and you have to belong. You know? Then you're fighting with your people, you're fighting the government. I love my mother to death and she was so strong for both of my sister and I, but there is another way to be strong. Other than to be the offence the entire time. I don't need to show her that side of the community. I can show her that her culture is there and that the politics are… blah, they are important and relevant. But she doesn't need to see that, no child should have to see or understand that at such a young age. I was 2 and 5 years old and I could feel it. So just because I grew up like that, it doesn't mean that she has to.* (Kayla)

Kayla wants her daughter to see the beautiful side of her culture and, not the politics or the kind of racism she experienced as a child. She does not think the community has healed enough from past events. As described earlier by Simpson (2014), certain political events that happened in the community have contributed to protectionist attitudes, racial tensions and the mistrust that some Mohawks have against the outside. Below, we will discuss the Oka Crisis, a significiant political event that happened in the community and the impacts it had on some of our participants' experiences with racism.

4. The Oka Crisis: A Significant Event

> *The Oka crisis was really really painful… I just remember the fear. You know, the mainstream has no idea… this is what we live with. And it's nothing compared to what our ancestors lived through as Native people. If you talk to people about their experiences on that topic [Oka Crisis], they can just go on for hours and just tell you stories of what they experienced.*
>
> (Vanessa)

Critical events associated with political life can also impact and transform one's sense of identity and belonging. The Oka crisis is a significant event that left a big mark on the community. Without being questionned or prompted by the researcher about this topic, three of our participants (Sarah, Vanessa, and Lisa) openly spoke of either witnessing or hearing stories from friends and family members about the occupation by the troops, the fear, as well as the perceived hatred Mohawks felt from non-Natives during and after the Oka Crisis. The participants believe that the racial tensions between the Mohawks and non-Natives exacerbated the double-marginalization they were subjected to as mixed-race individuals inside and outside the community. In the example below, Sarah explained how the Oka crisis contributed to the prejudicial attitudes she encountered from both Natives and non-Natives.

> *When the Oka crisis happened in 1990, there were some Non-native people I had been friends with since kindergarten and now their parents were like "she's not allowed at our house." One of my friend's parents were constantly watching us. I don't know what they thought I was going to do… Then eventually, I wasn't even allowed to call her house. They completely pushed me away. Those were the kinds of things I experienced from the "other" side, from the white side. Now the Native side, I certainly had times where people would say "you're just a mutt," "you think you're Mohawk, but you're not, you're white," or "You don't know what it's like to be a Mohawk." All kinds of stuff like that.* (Sarah)

The Oka crisis was a heated 78-day standoff between the town of Oka and the Mohawk communities of Kanehsatake (Oka) and Kahnawà:ke that began on July 11, 1990. This was a conflict over Oka's proposed golf course expansion on a Mohawk burial ground. As a form of

protest, Mohawks set up barricades around the site and blocked the Mercier Bridge, a frequently used commuter route between Montreal and the South shore. Indigenous peoples from across the country and the United States also joined the protest to lend their support. As tension escalated, the Quebec provincial police (Sûreté du Québec), the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), and the Canadian military forces were called in to intervene. The dispute deteriorated into violent confrontations that resulted in several injuries and the death of a police officer. Moreover, mobs of protesters and angry commuters, as well as Native and non-Native vigilantes took the matter into their own hands, occasioning many verbal and physical altercations between the groups. Although the Oka Crisis reportedly brought national attention to Indigenous land claims in Canada, it also resulted in reinforcing racial tensions and distrust between Natives and non-Natives. Vanessa and her family witnessed the violence first-hand, and they were target of violent acts from non-Natives who threw objects at their car while the family was trying to get into the reserve.

> *We were away camping and when we got back (to Kahnawà:ke) we couldn't get home because the reserve was blocked off by the army. I remember just being told to duck in the van and not put my head up and then there was a mob of people rocking my dad's van saying that they were going to kills us, and they were throwing stuff at the van. My dad was driving. Then we got to my mom's friends and we stayed there for a day but we had to keep all the blinds closed and we couldn't let anybody see that we were there. There were bikers going up and down the street, with effigies of Natives on crosses, saying they we're going to kill any "esti de sauvages." I remember hiding in the bathtub and looking out the crack of the window and just being so scared… There wasn't very many Native girls in my school; there were Native boys in my grade, but after 1990, a lot of the kids that were going to that French school didn't go back. Because it was really bad… I was even called a savage by a teacher in grade two. There was so much hate there… It wasn't just a little bit of hate or racism, it was a lot. They would have killed us if they could have.* (Vanessa)

Sarah was eleven years old when the crisis occurred, and she also has vivid memories of the events that took place that summer:

> *On July 10th, I slept at my grandparents. We (Mohawks) had set up a barricade, and the SQ set up theirs right away. And when my mom went to cross the line, the SQ said no one is going in. They weren't letting people in. And my mom said I'm Mohawk, you got to let me in. They said, we are not letting anyone cross either way. My mom said, well my children are out there and you can't separate me from my children. I don't care shoot me as I walk*

> *I'm going in. And they let her go. So we stayed at my grandparents' house in Kahnawà:ke for the first two weeks, and then we took a boat back to Châteaugay, and my mom wasn't sure where we were docking. She just told my father to wait on a certain road we would dock but she wasn't sure where. She walked one way to look for my dad, my brother walked the other way and she said to me, you stay right here. And I remember, there was a little girl playing across the street and I was eleven, maybe she was like six or so, she was small. And she started running towards me and her mother grabbed her by the neck and said, "Don't go talk to her, she's a savage." And… I'll never forget that. Because that's when it showed me that it's the parents who are putting it in their heads. That kid was more than happy to talk to me and she stopped her from coming. So those are the beginning memories of the racism, and then it got worse.* (Sarah)

During the Oka crisis, Mohawk women played a central role in the defense of their territory. Simpson (2014) explained that in solidarity with their people, disenfranchised women and those excluded from their bands joined hands with other Mohawk women on the front lines. Simpson (2014) writes: "In the midst of it, they were still contending with their own ongoing struggles against the state and their band councils. Some women were still suffering the burden of disenfranchisement. […] They did this regardless of blood quantum, clan or reserve (there were women from Kahnawà:ke there, as well as a few women who had traveled from other reserves, other parts of Canada)" (p. 148–149). This solidarity towards justice for their people and Mohawk community during the Oka Crisis was expressed by the participants and their families, yet many are not recognized by the band or by community members as belonging to their community. Sarah and Vanessa explained how witnessing the Oka crisis affected them personally in terms of streghtening their identification with and pride for their Native roots and their commitment to seeking justice for Indigenous rights. Sarah and Vanessa's accounts echo the observations by Branscombe et al. (1999) on the implications of discrimination of African Americans, which suggest that unfair treatment or perceived prejudice from the dominant group may lead to increased identification with one's minority group:

> *I think that [the Oka Crisis] was the start of me having a bit more… um… leaning towards my Mohawk roots. Because of watching everything on the news and listening to leaders on both sides, you know... I couldn't understand how no one else could understand what we were fighting for. It's an active living cemetery, and I couldn't understand anyone else's attitude about it. How could you tell us to give up? I think that got me going… not that I forsake the*

> *rest of my history. Like I said, I'm very connected to all of my parts. But there was definitely a time where I was like no, I… I get it, I feel it, I understand it… and I guess it was a time in my life where I was probably about to hit puberty, and identity in a lot of ways is coming up and that just kind of put me on a path, I guess, a bit more towards associating more to my Mohawk side. To be ready to fight… and argue for my people. So yeah, it definitely set me a bit more on an activist course.* (Sarah)

> *I get really defensive because of all the stuff of 1990 [Oka Crisis]. And because of going to school off the reserve and being called a savage. I get really defensive with people who put that out there. Ignorant people… I can really scream at people when they do that. I think that was something that affected me.* (Vanessa)

The participants also explained that the trauma people experienced during the Oka Crisis remains in the collective memory of many Mohawk, and it was carried across generations.

> *You know mainstream has no idea… This is what we live with, and it's nothing compared to what our ancestors lived through as Native people.* (Lisa)

> *Even now, people post stuff on Facebook about 1990 still. Even last week people were posting videos and they were like, this is what I grew up remembering, this is what I went through, so don't tell me to forget it.* (Vanessa)

Still today, our participants speak of a lingering distrust and cynicism between Mohawks and the outside. Lisa and Sarah, who both live in the community, explained that the Oka Crisis continues to impact Native-White relations within the community.

> *The ones who went through the Oka Crisis and who were older… they really had that hatred towards Whites. The kids who were ten years old, who watched the helicopters land and watched all that stuff happen and went through all that stuff… It was so bad… so it really put this fear, and then fear spurs hatred, and that's where the bullying comes from. When I was growing up, I got bullied a lot for being mixed and so I just stopped going out to places like bars because you can't even enjoy yourself because you're watching your back the whole time because there's so much hatred because of these cycles that are going through town. They just target people, and yeah, it's pretty crappy… I mean it's a good thing I can fight, I never got beaten up, but it sucks that I got my hair pulled out and you lose your earrings. So yeah, now it's a bit better, but people haven't healed.* (Vanessa)

> *Since 1990, a way of marginalizing someone people don't know in the community is questioning whether or not they are involved with the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mountain Police) undercover operation. That's just how*

> *fearful people who live there are. They are fearful of the government, fearful of anyone that is not from the community.* (Lisa)

For many of those who witnessed the occupation of the troops, the violence, as well as hatred from whites calling them "savages," the crisis instilled a sense of insecurity and fear. It also fostered a culture of mistrust and injustice towards the Canadian Governement within the community. Below are some pictures from the Oka Crisis.

Figure 4 – Images from the Oka Crisis

1) A barricade erected during the Oka crisis. Photo by: Archives / Agence QMI. Retrieved from: http://fr.canoe.ca/infos/regional/archives/2015/07/20150711-161016.html#4.
2) Soldiers and Mohawk Warriors near a barricade erected at Oka. Photo by: Jacques Nadeau, Le Devoir. Retrieved from: http://www.ledevoir.com/photos/galeries-photos/guerriers-mohawks-nouveau-genre/215744.
3) "A Quebec Metis places a stick with an eagle feather tied ot one end into the barrel of a machine gun on an army vehicle during the Oka Crisis." Photo by: Bill Grimshaw. Retrieved from: https://www.thestar.com/news/insight/2015/07/10/pan-ams-waneek-horn-miller-an-oka-crisis-survivor.html.
4) Solidarity in Kahnawà:ke: Mohawks blocking Mercier Bridge hours before police assault in Kanesatake. Photo by: KORLCC. Retrieved from: http://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/728220/crise-oka-images-retour.
5) Police behind barricade at Oka. Photo: PC / Ryan Remiorz. Retrieved from: http://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/728220/crise-oka-images-retour.
6) "Waneek Horn-Miller and her sister Kaniehtiio are shown 30 seconds after Waneek, then 14, was stabbed in the chest by a soldier wielding a bayonet during the 1990 Oka standoff.". Photo by: Ryan Remiorz. Retrieved from: https://www.thestar.com/news/insight/2015/07/10/pan-ams-waneek-horn-miller-an-oka-crisis-survivor.html.
7) Mohawk Warrior and Soldier meet face to face. Photo by: Jacques Nadeau, Archives, Le Devoir. Retrieved from: http://www.ledevoir.com/societe/actualites-en-societe/444276/la-crise-d-oka-en-sept-dates.
8) "A Mohawk warrior sits in a golf cart watching army tanks approach on Sept 1, 1990." Photo by: Tom Hanson/The Canadian Press File Photo. Retrieved from: https://www.thestar.com/news/insight/2015/08/22/a-warrior-a-soldier-and-a-photographer-remembering-the-oka-crisis.html.

5. The Importance of the Maternal Extended Family

> *I had one Mohawk aunt who I remember told me, there is nothing more important than family, family is everything, it is who you are. I will never forget that.*
>
> (Lisa)

Garrett and Walkingstick Garrett (1994) provided a descriptive model of the common Native American worldview, identity, and cultural values. According to the authors,

> The extended family (at least three generations) and tribal group take precedence over all else. The tribe is an interdependent system of people who perceive themselves as parts of the greater whole rather than as a whole consisting of individual parts. […] Among tribal members, a strong sense of belonging relies on cultural values, social relationships, as well as a sacred sense of connection with one's ancestry and tribal history. (Garrett and Walkingstick Garrett, 1994, p.136)

Their model highlights the importance among Natives of knowing their roots because "'who you are is where you come from.' Native American Indians believe that 'if you know my family, clan, tribe, then you know me.' As a result, many who are asked to describe themselves will most likely describe some aspects of their family or tribal heritage and affiliation" (Garrett and Walkingstick Garrett, 1994, p. 135). Indeed, when the participants were asked to complete the family tree activity prior to the interview, all the participants had a good knowledge of their genealogy, but especially on the Mohawk side of their family. It seems that they were taught at a young age the importance of knowing their roots. For example, Rachel showed us a family tree that she completed when she was a teenager. Moreover, Lisa explained:

> *We were raised to know who we are. As you can see with the family tree, I know my mom's side of the family better than I do my dad's side because that's how I was raised.* (Lisa)

Those (Lisa, Sarah and Vanessa) who knew less about their paternal extended family expressed the desire to learn more about their father's family now that they were older. For

example, the use of social media was helpful for Vanessa and Sarah, who said that they had reached out and connected with some of their paternal cousins on Facebook over the last few years. Moreover, Lisa expressed the intention of getting in contact with a family member who knows about her father's family history:

> *One of the things that I found while muddling through my feelings and getting myself centered on the topic of identity and belonging, I think part of it is also to start looking at my other side of the family as well and embrace that, because it makes you whole. My father passed away so I just have one aunt left with this history, so I have to go and talk to her before it's too late.* (Lisa)

All participants (except Rachel, who said she is equally close to both sides of her family) reported a greater attachment to their Mohawk extended family. They reported seeing their Mohawk families more often than their non-Native extended family, which helped enhance a strong sense of belonging and cultural identity to this side of their heritage. The participants' Mohawk extended families were also generally much bigger than their non-Native extended families. As illustrated in the following excerpts by Sarah, Kayla and Vanessa, the participants are proud to be a part of a large Mohawk family unit:

> *When I got married I had to have like 200 people at my wedding! [laughs] On my dad's side, I had my grandparents and my dad. That's it. On my Mohawk side, I had like 80 people. So I am definitely closer to my Mohawk side.* (Sarah)

> *We have a big family. My mom is one of seven children. I think we're 21 first cousins, but my grandfather is head of the clan. He is passed now. He had four brothers and they all have huge families. Every other year we have a family picnic. We get together with all of my family, all the time. Christmas, New Year's Eve, Thanksgiving are all big events that we throw with my mom's family.* (Kayla)

> *My Mohawk family is huge, there's like two hundred of us! I made a family tree on the on a Bristol board and there was too much! [laughs] My friend, she's Polish and she only has one brother and no kids. I was like awww, your little family tree… Our family tree is crazy huge! [laughs].* (Vanessa)

Importance of Family Values

The participants described their maternal families as closely knit and having a good kinship care system for all family members. In the following excerpt, Kayla expressed her appreciation for the collective and supportive nature of Native families, which she highly identifies with and respects:

> *I think there is a real sense of community and family that you don't get anywhere else. Even with all the stuff I told you about my family, we still get together and cook together, and we preserve ties. My aunt taught me to sow, she taught me a trade, everybody helps, and everybody has a role. Your little ones learn that. I remember the day when my grandmother died, everybody was so grief stricken, so I was like, "everybody come to granny's house." And I made a big pot of soup. When somebody can't do something, it's hard. I couldn't do this without my family, my sister, my mom, and my cousins. Even just a little bit of wisdom or a little bit of support is nice. That's how you do it, you need a network.* (Kayla)

Kayla also compared the communal nature of Native families to her interpretation of French Canadian families, which she perceived as being more individualistic and less present for the family members:

> *I have a [French Canadian] friend, who has a huge family. He has a ridiculous amount of cousins. He barely talks to his sister, nobody talks to each other, they don't eat together. They all live in the city and there is none of that sharing.* (Kayla)

The participants' Mohawk families maintained strong intergenerational solidarity, and they are very cooperative; the multiple generations work in unity to raise the young and to meet the needs of the elderly. We get the impression that the maternal extended family maintains the traditional Aboriginal values and ideals for the care of family members, as described below by Castellano (2002):

> The Aboriginal family in traditional, land-based societies was, until very recently, the principal institution mediating participation of individuals in social, economic and political life. The extended family distributed responsibilities for care and nurture of its members over a large network of grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. […] The notion of the caring, effective, extended family, co-extensive with community, continues to be a powerful ideal etched deep in the psyche of Aboriginal people. Even when participation in the labour market leads to mobility and regrouping in nuclear households, even when the expectation of care is frustrated by poverty, alcohol and violence, even when the electoral system enforced by the Indian Act bypasses family inclusiveness to create winners and losers, still the ideal lives on." (Castellano, 2002, p. 16)

Moreover, we get the sense that the participants' Mohawk families are a team, and that family members are taught at a young age to take it upon themselves to contribute and ensure that everybody is taken care of. As Kayla says in the excerpt above, "everybody helps, and

everybody has a role." This is clearly demonstrated in the case of Lisa, who has many siblings. She explained that everyone, even the younger family members, helps and take turns to attend to her aging mother's needs. Our participant sends her mother's schedule to the entire family (grandchildren included) via text message. In the following passage, she explains how the family executes the care of the mother:

> *We all have different relationships with her. Which is nice, because my mother always has somewhere to go, someone to see—she's very active with the family. We (siblings) have to be on top of scheduling because she doesn't want to offend anyone. I have to go in there and you know, straighten out her schedule. I text the schedule for the day to the family. "Tóta" is grandparent in Mohawk. I call it "Tóta watch." I write: "So and so will be there from this time, and so and so will be there after. We need somebody tonight or tomorrow night or the weekend. Who can go?" I send the text to all the nieces and grandchildren too. Somebody ends up there with her. It's worked. She is doing well… One of my nieces lives permanently with her also.* (Lisa)

The Quality of the Relationship with the Extended Family

The quality of the relationship with the extended family was also important for the maintenance of regular contacts. Although Josie grew up outside of Kahnawà:ke, she visited her family often because she felt loved and accepted by her aunts and grandparents.

> *I always felt closer to my mom's side. Her two sisters are still living there now and we're very close. I grew up mostly with my Native mother and Native grandparents, even when we moved out of town, I would come back to Kahnawà:ke and be with them on weekends and holidays. So even being thrown off the reserve, it didn't stop us from always being together or being with my Native grandparents. I kept ties with my family and my grandparents were still alive at the time, and they were like "Screw them! Come visit us!" So I lived off the reserve with my parents and spent my summers with my grandparents on the reserve. I would spend all summer with them and my friends.* (Josie)

Josie described having painful childhood memories of her family and her being "kicked out" of the reserve, but her Native family in Kahnawà:ke always welcomed them with open arms, which gave her a sense of belonging.

> *It was embarrassing and degrading being kicked out of the community. My parents were asked to leave and were removed from their community. They had to leave by a certain date. They write these eviction letters to non-Natives every 5-10 years or so… So you know, when you're a child and your parents are*

> *being kicked out of the community that you've lived in since you are born, you're feeling unwanted and unloved, like you're garbage being kicked to the curb. But I would say that I overcame that over the years, because I had a stronghold with my mom's family, and that's what kept us coming back to the community.* (Josie)

To this day, she continues to hold some unresolved negative feelings towards the community over what her family endured. However, the love and affection she received from her maternal extended family members are what kept her coming back and involved in the community. After Josie's mother passed away, she explained in what way her maternal aunts helped her keep in touch with the Mohawk culture:

> *The most important factor that helped me with cultural identity would have to be the extended family. Like I said, we grew up very close and even with my mom passing away, they [maternal family] still feel a strong sense to be with me… I would have to say that the extended family is most important, because they kept me involved in the community and they wanted me there and they taught me the cultural things. If I didn't have them when my mother passed away, I probably wouldn't even be part of the community all that much anymore. I wouldn't have a reason to go back… other than the fact that I would have to apply for my status card there every year.* (Josie)

Maternal family love and support helped Josie cope with the loss of her mother. They embraced her and gave her a connection to her mother's culture that she would not have had if it were not for them. Today, she reports identifying more with her Mohawk culture because of the influence of her extended maternal family.

Vanessa strongly identifies with her Mohawk roots and describes being closer to her maternal extended family because they never made her feel different for being mixed. In the comfort of her maternal grandmother's home where the family members would often reunite, Vanessa said she felt loved, secure, and fully accepted. On the other hand, she describes her relationship with her non-Native family as very formal and distant:

> *I didn't know my father's family. I would see my grandparents once in a while. I don't have many cousins from my dad's side… just those from my dad's brother, but we didn't really talk to them. We didn't have any family on my dad's side really… Like if we saw each other, we would get like a hug and that's it. You weren't able to be yourself with our paternal grandparents so there was no relationship there.* (Vanessa)

Vanessa feels estranged by her non-Native grandparents, whom she describes as having Euro-centric attitudes towards Native culture. Her paternal grandparents made comments about her skin being too dark, which made her feel different and not fully accepted by them:

> *My brother was born blonde with blue eyes and they [paternal grandparents] were fine with that, but then when I was born, my grandparents said "why is she so dark?" Well your son did marry a Native… So it could happen. [laugh] Those were they types of comments I heard from them, and they didn't want us to grow up on the reserve because they didn't want us to know our Native side.* (Vanessa)

The frequent contact and the quality of the relationship with their family members reinforced the participants' sense of belonging. In particular, the positive influence of parents and Mohawk grandparents were said to play an important role in the participants' lives. In the following section, we will discuss the impact of the support provided by parents and grandparents on their sense of identity and belonging.

6. The Influence of Parents and Grandparents

> *You know my grandfather [Mohawk] would often sit with me and say "Josephine, you're Mohawk no matter what!"*
>
> (Josie)

Often, our participants' grandparents—predominantly Mohawk grandmothers—worked together with our participants' parents to help raise the youth. It seems that grandchildren living permanently or temporarily with grandparents or in multigenerational households are common in Mohawk families. For example, Kayla described being practically raised by her grandmother. Her grandmother's home was where the family members would gather daily, and on special occasions. She said:

> *My grandmother and I were very close. She's not alive anymore. My grandmother was like my mom for a long time. In the summer, since my grandma passed, it hasn't been the same. But when I was a kid, everyone would*

> *get together and all the kids would run around in the yard. It was amazing.* (Kayla)

Vanessa lived with her maternal grandmother and her uncles. She described her grandmother's home as a welcoming space where family members of different generations frequently reunited:

> *We grew up with my grandmother [maternal], all my uncles were at the house daily, and there was always a pot of soup on the stove. One uncle would be in at different times of the day and sit with my grandmother and all her friends would come over and her sisters… so that is what I grew up with.* (Vanessa)

All the participants spoke of their parents and maternal grandparents as being role-models who often gave them positive reinforcement and encouraged them to take pride in their cultural heritage. The parents and/or grandparents often made efforts to reinforce values and support their children in times of self-doubt. Participants recalled some of the discussions that were meaningful in strengthening their sense of identity and self-esteem. For example, Josie remembered incidents in her childhood of being teased and called a "Frenchman" by kids in the community because she is mixed. She recalled discussions with her maternal grandfather, who often reminded her to be proud of her Mohawk roots. He would sometimes tease her and say, "You're going to marry a Mohawk and be able to come back and stay here with us forever!" [Laughs] These types of meaningful interaction had a positive impact in the participant's life. It made her feel included, accepted, and wanted by her Mohawk family. Moreover, Kayla, who was a victim of severe bullying for being "mixed-blood" also described how her mother never let her feel bad about who she is and where she came from. She stated:

> *My mom is so strong. I remember her yelling at kids, "Leave my fucking kids alone!" and fighting with other parents saying, "Do you know what your kid did to my kid?" My mom was tough; she was the mama bear. She never let us feel bad about where we came from. She said you have to celebrate both sides of your heritage. You girls [Kayla and her sister] are beautiful. It was hard because we felt different and looked different. And I know, identity-wise, even like when i got to puberty I didn't feel attractive… I had a hard time with that. But ya, it was different, we definitely had a hard time, my sister and I.* (Kayla)

Rachel's father, who is of European descent, would also try to instill a sense of pride in his children by frequently reminding them that they have "the best of both worlds":

My father would often say stuff like, "you kids are the best, you kids are hybrid! You know what a hybrid is?" It was a fun thing and to me I really felt like I was both, that's what it came out as to me, and I think all my siblings feel similarly about that. It's funny because even though we've been exiled, rejected and all that, I still feel so Mohawk. […] So are you half or are you double? I think I'm double. I think I'm both. I think I have two amazing heritages to draw upon. I don't feel like I'm half or have had less. I probably should feel that way, and I have every right to feel that way. But I don't, thankfully I feel fine. (Rachel)

As these excerpts demonstrate, the family is a powerful socialization agent. The quality of this relationship is an important influence for building self-assurance and re-enforcing a sense of cultural identity and inclusion in the family and community. Insecurities about not belonging were abated by meaningful interactions with grandparents and parents who helped strengthen their self-acceptance and pride in their Mohawk roots when the participants were young. As adults, their parents' and grandparents' supportive words continue to hold true. As we will see in the chapter on cultural transmission, our participants, five of whom are now mothers themselves, encourage their own children and other children in the community to cherish their roots and to be proud of who they are. This brings us to the role and importance accorded to women in Mohawk families.

7. The Important Role of Mohawk Women

"An Iroquoian equivalent of 'woman' is *gantowisas*, yet the term conveys more than woman. She is political woman, faith-keeping woman, mediating woman; leader; counsellor; judge. *Gantowisas* indicates mother, grandmother, and even the Mother of Nations, as the Corn Mother, Herself, whose shining new face lies beneath the ground to rise again, each year. […] *Gantowisas*, then, means indispensable woman." (Barbara Mann, 2000, p. 16)

The women of Kahnawà:ke have historically been the "mothers of the Nation." They had a vested political authority over the land and made important decisions in the community. Moreover, they are traditionally in charge of transmitting their Mohawk culture to the children. Today, women may self-identify as Mohawk but may not be recognized as such by

their community. Thus, living outside the reserve makes practicing their role as cultural transmitters much more challenging. In the excerpt below, Josie shared her thoughts on the issue:

> *They [Mohawk council of Kahnawá:ke] are not preserving much [cultural identity] if they are ignoring half of what's important. I think that the person who made that law must have been a man, because women were the most important part at one time of the Mohawk culture. You can say that they were the ones responsible and in charge of transmitting culture and of providing guidance. Everything came from the women. They would decide when it was time to hunt, everything was done, it was done through the women. The clans, I still have my clan and I passed it down through the women. My clan is the Wolf clan. How can you preserve it, if you are just throwing it away? It's very ignorant to say that Mohawk men can marry White women and they can live on the reserve, but Mohawk women cannot marry White men or else they have to leave. What makes their children more important than me? We are both half and half. You know it all starts off with 23 chromosomes from each… Either way it doesn't make any difference. I think now they are strongly putting emphasis on both men and women marrying out, but it's too late. The damage has been done. The damage to the transmission of culture has been done. The women are the ones who were responsible for transmitting the culture and they were denied their rights and kicked out. All throughout the 1960s and 1970s, they were throwing out the better part of their culture [the women]. Now they [Mohawks] are reading up on the history of it and going back to find the culture any way that they can, but it was denied to us for so many generations.* (Josie)

The Women in the Family

The women in our participants' families—grandmothers, mothers and aunts—were said to be positive influences and set fine examples of what it means to be Mohawk women: matriarchs, strong leaders, able to stand up for themselves and to unite and take care of the family. Take, for example, this quote from Vanessa: "My grandmother was like the nucleus of everything, she kept everyone together. When she died it was brutal, everything fell apart." Vanessa described having confrontations with "full-blood" Native girls in the community who called out her differences and bullied her for being mixed. The teasing and bullying she endured brought on greater self-awareness, and it led to feelings of isolation from the girls in her community. Vanessa shared how the love and care provided by her maternal grandmother helped her with her self-esteem. She explained in what ways her grandmother was an anchor and a strong role-model for her:

> *I remember being bullied and I just didn't care. I think it's because my grandmother (maternal) was always there for me and I didn't care. If anything happened I would just go to her and she would be like "Never mind them." My grandmother was just always there. She was so strong because my mom was ill for a long time when we were kids so it was my grandmother that we were always with while my mom would be sleeping or whatever. Just watching my grandmother, she had all these boys she raised on her own because my grandfather was an ironworker, and so he was always away. So she had all these boys she raised, and she took care of family members and other people in the community. She would go and take care of them to make sure they had everything they needed. She would take care of her aunts, these two old ladies that lived together. So I would accompany her to do her thing with them. There was this Cree woman, she would help her bathe. She was just there for everybody… She was like my role-model, super strong, a tiny little thing, not loud. Just funny and enjoyed the small things in life.* (Vanessa)

Below are two more passages from participants—Lisa and Josie, respectively—who shared some of their early memories with the elder women in their families:

> *Any unconditional love I had came from my grandmother and my aunts that traditionally did their jobs as Mohawk women, which was to ensure the care of the family. My aunts and my mom were very close and even more so when my grandmother died. I really miss her. Also, my aunt truly lived her role as a Mohawk woman. She was a true matriarch of the family; she embraced everybody and made you feel special. Everybody was like her daughter; she was a true matriarch for her family. Man, is she missed… That is something she used to do, and my grandmother too. It wasn't intentional; it's just the way they were. That's just the way my Mohawk family were.* (Lisa)

> *My mother and grandmother were very close and I think that's the reason we kept going back [to Kahnawà:ke], and I have an aunt that's only two years older than I am so we were always together. We grew up together and if we weren't always with my grandmother we were always with my mother. They [aunts and grandmother] taught me beadwork and keeping the culture… you know, we would all sit together, my aunts, my mom and my grandmother and we would bead together.* (Josie)

Frequent interactions and bonding time with the women in their families were meaningful. They were good role-models and they transmitted positive influences.

Learning from Mohawk "Sisters"

When asked if they could think of other factors that have facilitated their sense of cultural identity, three of our participants (Vanessa, Rachel and Kayla) spoke of the merits of attending the breastfeeding support group that is offered to women in the community. Participating in the class was a way of meeting other women, and it allowed them to witness how other Mohawk women treat child-rearing. Meeting other Mohawk mothers was meaningful for the participants because it instilled a sense of solidarity and pride in being a Mohawk woman.

> *The breast-feeding group nice because you weren't going to do it on your own. You meet other Mohawk women and see how they treat motherhood. So it was nice.* (Vanessa)

Rachel explains that meeting other women in the breastfeeding group allowed her to feel more part of the community as she was able to meet other Mohawks beyond her family:

> *At the breast-feeding support group, I met some Mohawk women and we hit it off and became close friends. Being a part of this group was a great thing that happened to me. It helped me feel more part of the community than just with my family. To have this social network.* (Rachel)

Kayla described the women she met in the breastfeeding group as strong and they transmitted what it means to be a Mohawk woman via modeling non-verbal attitudinal influences:

> *One thing that was really nice is that after I had my daughter, I was asked to join a breastfeeding group in Kahnawà:ke and that was really lovely. Like really really lovely, I met other Native moms and it was really helpful. I'm in a lot of mom groups and I found that it was such a relief. One thing that I really don't like about these parent groups in Montreal, it was non-stop negativity. Like "oh my partner did this and that." And I get it because if you're pregnant or you have a newborn, we've all been there and we need to vent, but it was always like "this is so hard bla bla bla." Then you go to this breastfeeding group in Kahnawà:ke and all these women are there, and they're like "I got this." You just handle your shit. The women in my community are very strong, so it was nice to be with them and learn from them. I remember talking about introducing the bottle earlier and the woman in the group was like you shouldn't because there is nipple confusion, this other woman leans over to me and says she's full of shit, do it now. One girl was like, "this is my third baby and my labour was hard, I was in labour for 18 hours, I had an infection, it was really painful." And for me I pushed for 3 hours and I remember being like this is the worst! Before I gave birth, in my last 2 weeks of pregnancy I was talking*

> *to this girl and she was like, "I was in labor for 20 something hours, but it was awesome." She was like, look at her (daughter), she's perfect. Just the way she was talking about it was like, yes, it wasn't a great experience… but look what came out of it. I like that kind of outlook on life; it's just like nothing gets you down. There's this really strong connection with your kid in child-rearing that I think is very unique to Native parenting.* (Kayla)

Learning from Mohawk women in their families and in the community inspired our participants to become strong, empowered women. The women in their families and in the breast feeding group were described as sharing positive attitudinal influences, which the participants admire and embrace today. In this chapter, some of the factors that were important for facilitating the construction of their Mohawk identity and sense of belonging were presented. In the following chapter, we show how the participants assume their role as Mohawk women in daily efforts to empower the following generations to take pride in their Native heritage. For example, Vanessa mentors adolescent girls, tries to keep them involved in the community, and encourages them to pursue their studies:

> *It's been a nice experience and I really enjoy that fact to be able to give back to the community in that way and keep them out of trouble and keep them in something positive. Because a lot of our statistics are that girls get pregnant before they are 18 all the time. Girls get pregnant outside of the reserve just as much, but we are less pro-abortion. I know that there are girls who get abortions but here it is more acceptable to pull up your pants and do what you got to do. There's just such a high number of teenage pregnancies, and that is my biggest thing… try and get through high school and graduate.* (Vanessa)

The participants' willingness and determination to share certain aspects of Mohawk culture and to give back to Mohawk youths suggests the importance they attach to their Mohawk heritage and identity.

CHAPTER 5 - THE INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF CULTURE

> *It is my job to teach my daughter about the customs; it's not her father's job. Most of the stuff about my culture I've learned because I sought out the information and I've spoken to people and elders. I've learned how to do stuff. I do a lot of regalia making and seamstress work and stuff like that. I do traditional outfits and I've picked up beadwork, I danced in the Pow Wow. It's really special, and the culture is something I'm trying to access more and more. I'm trying to rebuild my base so I can teach my daughter.*
>
> (Kayla)

Today, all the women in our study embody and self-affirm their role as Mohawk women, knowing that it is through them that culture is passed on. As stated by our participant Kayla,

> *I have a clan, my mother is Native, she is the cultural holder and they carry the bloodline, right? I am Mohawk, and it is my duty to pass on my culture to my kids. At this point in my life, I'm like nobody can take that away from me. Nobody can take away the access to my culture. It might be a little bit more difficult; people might give you a side eye, but if people don't like it, screw them. That was kind of it, I just said that I'll do things for myself because I really, really want to do it for myself.* (Kayla)

At the time of the interview, Kayla was engaged in various learning activities (traditional dance lessons, seamstress work for traditional costumes, etc.) to reappropriate her culture and share the teachings with her daughter when she grows older:

> *You make your home where you want it. So I am making my cultural and my spiritual home where I am. That's what I am transmitting to my daughter. It's really cool because I feel like I'm learning and I can hopefully teach her in a few years. I don't know, I think it's a really cool place to be. [Smiles]* (Kayla)

This chapter presents the cultural identity markers that were transmitted (or not) to our participants by their Mohawk families, and how they assert their identity as Mohawk women in their daily lives by appropriating, learning, and participating in the transmission of culture

and identity to the next generation. The following themes were explored with the participants: language, naming practices, spirituality, cultural ceremonies, and way of life.[16]

1. Language

> *The Mohawk women in my family taught me everything, except the language. There are two generations of people, say, from the ages of 50 and up where they don't speak or they don't have the language. It's a loss… I guess its part of the evolution of the language, but in our community you feel that loss more so.*
>
> (Lisa)

For all our participants, English was the language used for communicating in their household and with friends. Five participants have a working knowledge of French. Only Josie, whose father is French-Canadian, speaks French fluently. As stated by Lisa in the excerpt above, two generations of Mohawks were not in contact with their Native language, and as a result none of the participants speak Mohawk fluently. However, they all have some knowledge of words and phrases in the Mohawk vocabulary.

> *I know all these basic words, commands, all your body parts, all your clothes, wash your hands, like all basic stuff.* (Vanessa)

> *There was a strong period where the Mohawk language was removed. So I can count from 1 to 10 and name colors and animals, but that's it.* (Lisa)

> *I would have liked to have known more of the language, but like, even my aunts who are full Mohawk that do live in the community, they can only say some colors and animals, but we cannot carry on a conversation in Mohawk.* (Josie)

[16] The themes are not listed in any order of importance.

The Generation Gap in the Transmission of Mohawk Language

The language generational gap is not specific to Kahnawà:ke (as shown by the statistics from the National Household Survey in the literature review). Canada's legacy of residential schools and the sixties scoop are major contributing factors that led to the erosion of the intergenerational transmission of Aboriginal languages. As confirmed by Lisa, Josie, and Sarah, respectively, Aboriginal parents and grandparents did not speak the language to their children as a way of protecting them from punishment in school:

> *What the government and church set out to do is assimilate us into the mainstream. To kill the Indian in the child, and that worked for a while. So you have someone like me who should have had my language, and I don't for different reasons. They didn't teach us. My mother said that the reason they didn't speak to us in Mohawk is because they had to learn English, and she was afraid. In those days, there was such a push for, a trend in the community to become modern.* (Lisa)

> *What you have to understand is that at that time, the Catholic Church was a very strong influence, and back when my grandparents were in school, if they would get caught speaking the language they would get punished. The language and the culture were really being repressed. The Mohawk language was almost lost at one point. No one spoke Mohawk anymore, it was French and English.* (Josie)

> *In my mom's generation, the language got lost because parents wouldn't teach their children to protect them from residential schools. So my mom knew some words that you hear and get used to, but not enough to teach me. And I went to school off reserve because I had no choice, so I was not exposed to it. (Sarah)*

The elders who were fluent in Mohawk spoke it amongst themselves. As explained in the excerpts from Kayla and Vanessa, Mohawk was the elders' "secret language":

> *Our grandmother spoke Mohawk but she is or was of the old way. That was a secret language that they kept to themselves. They didn't teach their children Kanien'kéha (Mohawk language), and that comes from residential schools. So grandparents didn't teach their kids. That was just the way adults would do it. It was their secret language when you would want to have it out or get angry you would switch over to Mohawk and nobody would understand what you were saying.* (Kayla)

> *My grandmother spoke the language in the house with all her friends and everybody, but it was never passed on to us. It was like their language. The older people, the generation gap that followed when they lost their kids to the schools, like my mom's generation, they would be punished for speaking their language so it kind of like, the grandparents were like, well what's the point? Because they are just going to get in trouble anyways, so why teach it to the kids? So it got lost in that generation.* (Vanessa)

The Revitalization of Language in the Community

Today, Aboriginal parents are finding it increasingly important for their children to learn their Native language. Our participants spoke of the community's efforts and the investments put into programs aimed at promoting the culture and bringing back the language. As Vanessa, Lisa, and Josie, respectively, said:

> *The youth center has a lot of programs for the kids like basket-making and singing. I think that's what was lacking for a while, but now they are doing a good job with it. I mean now there are a lot of programs geared towards the cultural stuff in the last 10 years. There's been a big push for the kids, so there is a lot of availability if you want it. They are working on it really hard, they are pushing it really hard for language programs. They have a two-year intense program for adults to go into, so that's really nice.* (Vanessa)

> *There are a lot of good things that are happening in the community, like community groups that are available. We have many many women, there are men too, but it's mostly women that are really going back to our culture, learning and living that way in terms of following the ceremonies, which is really amazing because in my day culture wasn't even discussed. It was repressed. Now, two of my siblings go to ceremonies and sweat lodges. They make sure my nieces and even my great nieces have been in Mohawk immersion school. One of them teaches Mohawk. So if you look at my family, it's a good picture of the changes in the community.* (Lisa)

> *When I was in my teens, Native women from town and from other reserves would come into town, and that was the time that they we're trying to bring the language back and regenerated. Also, the school up the hill became a Mohawk immersion school. So the younger generations in their 20s today, they are bringing it back, but the language was almost practically lost. (Josie)*

We sense an obvious interest and enthusiasm from our participants to learn Mohawk. This interest may be in part encouraged by the availability of language revitalization programs

in the community. For example, four of the participants reported participating in Mohawk learning courses offered in the community. At the time of the interview, Vanessa was enrolled in a Mohawk language night course in the community.

> *I feel that because I was gyped a bit on the language stuff. I have way more appreciation for it than a lot of people who had it and went to the Mohawk school and just forgot it… they just didn't hold on to it.* (Vanessa)

Sarah feels similarly about the importance of learning the language and transmitting it to her daughter:

> *Because I didn't have that chance, nor did my mother really. I took some courses as an adult, but I'm not the sponge that I could have been! And so, I'm glad to be able to give that back to my daughter. I am hoping that she will continue to learn the language because it's so important.* (Sarah)

Moreover, the use of technology makes learning the language more accessible than it was in the past. Lisa referred to using the Rosetta Stone computer program for learning Mohawk. Sarah showed me an application on her smart phone called "Talk Mohawk 2012," which is an application that helps users to learn and practice the Mohawk dialect.

Efforts to Expose their Children to the Mohawk Language

The participants expressed a strong desire to expose their children to Mohawk language-learning opportunities. Lisa does not have children, but if she did she said she would try to give them all the opportunities that she did not have as a youth to learn the language.

> *If I had children of my own, following what my sister did with my nieces, I would do everything in my power so that my children have their language because your language is your identity in a lot of ways. You learn from our language and there is a history within some of the words. More and more we are losing people with that kind of knowledge… the elders.* (Lisa)

Josie would have liked to expose her children to Mohawk language classes, but they lived very far from Kahnawà:ke, where language learning programs were not offered. For those who reside outside of town, Mohawk classes are hard to find. In fact, Rachel also felt there was not enough Indigenous education in grade schools outside of the community. She volunteered to create age-appropriate programs for each grade in her children's school, which focuses on Indigenous education. Two of our participants chose to enroll their children in establishments

in the community, which teach the language and introduce the children to different aspects of their culture.

> *My son speaks Mohawk all day at school. We have our own curriculum so they are more hands-on with everything. Like, he made a book, he knows all his medicine to pick, what they are used for, how to make them, he knows how to sew, how to make a rattle, do wood work, how to make baskets, all this stuff while they are learning the language at the same time. It's more real-life then sitting at a desk all day long. It really creates a strong sense of identity.* (Vanessa)

At the same time, Vanessa can learn with her son when he completes projects for school. She says:

> *The language is very complicated. I can take all the words I know and I can take a dictionary of Mohawk language even and do his projects with him, and it doesn't make sense! [Laughs] I'm like, damn, I thought I was on! [Laughs] Ya, my son laughs at me and he corrects me.* (Vanessa)

For Sarah and Vanessa, transmitting Mohawk language to their children is prioritized over the French language.

> *My daughter is like a sponge now. And there are so few speakers, and everyone is trying to make sure that it survives. My parents' generation completely lost it. We are trying to bring the language back and make it strong again, so I feel that it's important for my daughter because she can pick up Mohawk now and when she gets to school she can pick up French later. You know? That's everywhere, so it is a bit easier to see it all the time. Whereas Mohawk, you know… you see it there, and so she can get that now.* (Sarah)

> *I was lacking the Mohawk language while growing up, so I made sure that my son had full sense of who he is and where he is from. He first learned Mohawk, and then he can take on everything else—French and English. He learned English a long time ago from us speaking, then he learned reading by comic books, and now he's learning French by comic books. It's just how much effort you want to put into it. Now it's the big thing on the reserve, more people are choosing to send their kids to French school than to our language. So we're going to completely lose it, and they (Mohawks) need to realize that it can't be lost because it's so important.* (Vanessa)

2. Naming Practices

> *In Mohawk, in the traditional way for all Iroquois people, there's only supposed to be one person with that name. I love my Mohawk name because it's such an old name.*
>
> (Rachel)

In traditional Iroquois naming ceremonies, clan mothers in the longhouse were responsible for bestowing the names of the children in their clan. The name that was given to the child was for him to hold and could not be given to anyone else until death. The naming ceremony still exists today, but those without a clan cannot be named in the longhouse. Instead, they are named by relatives or respected elders in their family.

> *A lot of people in the community have the same name because they are not named in the longhouse. If you are named in the longhouse, then you are the only one with that name. But people who aren't named in the longhouse end up with the same names. And a lot of people use the same names too, like "nice day," "pretty flower"... basic stuff... they will reuse those names.* (Vanessa)

Because clans are matrilineal, mixed-Mohawks who have a non-Native mother do not have a clan and cannot be named in the longhouse. Vanessa explained that being a part of a clan helped her feel more a part of the Mohawk culture and allowed her to assume her identity as Mohawk first:

> *I identify as Mohawk first, and when people ask I say I'm half. But I think I identify as Mohawk first because I have a clan. I think people who were born with a father who was Native and mother who wasn't, then you don't have a clan. I got my clan. Even people I know who live in the community that don't have a clan, they don't know what to say when people ask them what their clan is, so they will identify with their dad. Like if their dad is Native and their mom is not, then they don't have a clan. So unless you've been adopted in a clan, you don't have a clan. A lot of them are like, "I'm bear," but really they are not. Because clans are matrilineal.* (Vanessa)

Vanessa is the only participant who went through the naming process in the longhouse for her son when he was a baby. Today, her son only goes by his Mohawk name. Below she describes how naming him by the longhouse helped in terms of giving him a strong sense of identity:

> *My son only goes by his Mohawk name. I went through the clan mothers and they asked me if I wanted to go for a name in the family, or… because some people go based on the weather or the time of year. They asked me what my pregnancy was like and I described it. I asked them if they could make a name for me and they made a name. So I went through all of that. I got his birth certificate and got him named and everything. It was important for me to make sure that he was able to have his stuff taken care of properly. I knew that it was so important to stay on that track and to stay with that. Now, he's so comfortable in the culture. He has no shy-ness for his culture. He's really proud, and he knows who he is. That was the biggest thing that I wanted for him.* (Vanessa)

Kayla also has a clan, but she was not named in the longhouse. She was named by a family member, but she does not use her Mohawk name because she says that it is a common name. She has not given her daughter a Mohawk name because she wants to wait to do it the "right way," with the clan mothers in the longhouse.

> *I wasn't named by the longhouse. I could have given my daughter a Mohawk name, but if i'm going to do it, I want to do it the right way by the longhouse. I would like to go, and I think part of that process is that I will have to get renamed too, because I don't use my Mohawk name. Actually part of this whole cultural exploration thing that I'm doing right now is that I would like to go to the longhouse to be re-named, and name my daughter. It's something I need to be strong about. I'm a bit intimidated and there is a process, and they are not welcoming. It's kind of like Judaism—I think they push you away a lot. They continually test you. One of my friends is doing it because she is trying to get her daughter named and her husband is Non-Native. She is Mohawk and she went to the longhouse, and they said we see these people come and they name their kids and never come back again.* (Kayla)

Sarah and her husband would have preferred to name their daughter in the longhouse, but the current rules do not allow Non-Native people to attend the ceremony, and Sarah said she would like her non-Native relatives to be present for this important event.

> *It was important for me to give my daughter a Mohawk middle name. People could say, well you could go get her named in the longhouse, but my problem with the longhouse is, as much as they may welcome me more than the membership list would welcome me. If I decide to go that way and have a*

> *ceremony there, then my father is not allowed to be there, and my grandmother is not allowed to be there, my niece and sister in law are not allowed to be there. And I am not okay with that. Because I want to be able to include my family in my important life events. Because in the longhouse now, they don't let non-Native people in. So if you decide to get married there, you can't have your white family there. If you decide to name your child in the longhouse, when they have their naming ceremony, they can't be there. I'm not going to choose something that's going to separate my family.* (Sarah)

The participants' parents were keen on bestowing Mohawk names on them. All participants, except for Josie (who does not have a Mohawk name), have Mohawk names that were given to them by respected family members. The participants who are now mothers expressed how important it was for them to give their children a name that symbolizes an affiliation to their Mohawk heritage. Because Josie was not given a Mohawk name, she made sure that all her children were named by her Mohawk grandfather. She was very close with her grandfather (recall that her grandfather would encourage her to be proud of her Mohawk heritage).

> *It was important for me to give them Mohawk names to honour my grandfather. I asked my grandfather at the time, he was still alive. He was the one who found the names for them. The name has to be special and there can only be one. Like we cannot all be called Carole and Linda, there can only be one sense in the name. It usually has a lot to do with nature.* (Josie)

While the participants may not use their own Mohawk names daily, they feel that their name is an important cultural marker for their sense of personal identity and feelings of belonging to this side of their culture. The act of giving Mohawk names to their children also symbolizes an attachment to their Mohawk family heritage. Thus, whether the child was given their Mohawk name by a member of the family or by the longhouse, it shows a devotion and sense of pride to their Mohawk roots—and desire to share this with their children.

3. Spirituality, Cultural Ceremonies and Way of Life

> *I understand more of that way of life [Mohawk way of life] than other ways. Our cycle ceremonies are very connected to what is sustained through agricultural society. So, the thunders, the harvest, the seeds, all those type of things are what we give thanks for in our ceremonies. Those of the things that keep me alive and I understand that. When Church comes into question, even though I grew up in it. As you get older, you start thinking about things. Like saying thank you to some guy that I don't know, that I've never seen and who apparently gives me anything, that didn't work for me anymore.*
>
> (Sarah)

In the late-seventeenth century, converted Christian Mohawks in search of a Christian refuge community travelled from the Mohawk valley of upstate New York to what is now know as Kahnawà:ke (Simpson, 2014). Today there are various Christian denominations on the reserve. There is a Catholic Church, a Protestant Church, and a Penticostal Church to meet the needs of Christian Mohawks. There are also two longhouses for those who practice the traditional ceremonies. All the participants' mothers were raised either Catholic or Jehovah's Witnesses. Three of our participants (Lisa, Rachel, and Josie) were baptized Catholic, but only Lisa practices her religion today. Lisa is the eldest of the participants, and she has noticed the changes that have been happening in the community regarding religion:

> *We have many many women, there are men too, but it's mostly women that are really going back to our culture, living that way in terms of following the ceremonies, which is really amazing because in my day it wasn't even discussed. At least in my family, we were Catholics, really rigid Catholics.* (Lisa)

The changes described by Lisa were confirmed by our participants' accounts. Many do not practice their parents' Christian faith, and all the women reported associating more with Mohawk traditions and ways of life. For example, Josie was baptized Catholic, but she never really identified with Christianity. Today, she feels that the "Mohawk ways" are more in line

with her worldview. Josie and her son have been learning more about the customs in Native communties and they attend various traditional ceremonies in the last ten years. Josie stated,

> *I was baptized Catholic; I did my first communion, but I was always bored. I never really made sense of the last supper being 13 men. [Laughs] I would say if I had to choose, I am more pagan. I think that a lot of the Mohawk ways are a lot like that. It's strongly connected to paganism. But it didn't really get transmitted to my children because I wasn't really a part of it before that. Now, my eldest son, he drums and sings Native, and he was a stone-keeper for a sweat lodge. We learned how to do all that, but not within our community. From other Native people who taught us. Compared to my community, I find that other Native groups embrace you. They say you're Native and that's all that matters. Even if you're half, quarter, etc. And they are more open-minded to transmit the culture and to be a part of each other and mother earth, that's what its basically all about.* (Josie)

Holidays and Meals

For five of the participants, the Catholic holidays such as Christmas and Easter were celebrated with their Mohawk families, but as Josie said, "The holidays became more or less a gathering for the food, an excuse to have fun." The participants reported that the holidays and special occasions are usually big gatherings in their Mohawk families, where traditional food (for example, meat pies, cornbread and steak, corn soup, hangover soup, etc.) are often prepared by the older members of the family. The meat pie was mentioned often as being important part of a meal. Lisa explained explained what it is,

> *It is not a tourtière! Meat pie has to be on the table for the holidays. The meat pie that we do is pork and potatoes and salt and pepper. It's very plain, but boy, you have to know how to do your crust. And you have to have the right measure of meat to potatoes. It has to be the right ratio.* (Lisa)

During the holidays, Lisa and her siblings are usually in charge of cooking the traditional meals, but with age they are becoming tired of cooking big meals for the family. They have not passed down the recipes to the young ones in the family because the youth are not really interested in learning how to prepare these meals.

> *We didn't teach them, and I don't know if they are interested because the kids are into all kinds of things now. Recently, we were having a dinner out with the family. I was looking at these kids, the youngest one at the table is eleven or twelve and they are all ordering escargot. I was thinking, well, this isn't traditional food and would they even be interested it in traditional food? I think*

> *they would... but we have to make a decision to let it go and let them do it. That's where we are at in life!* (Lisa)

Rachel used to help her mother prepare the traditional meat pies, corn soup and corn bread. Today, she does not cook the meals very often because her children do not like them. The general trend ascertained from the interviews was that the Mohawk meals were a part of the participants' childhood, but the transmission of traditional meals does not seem to be an important cultural marker to pass down to their own children. On the other hand, embracing Mohawk ways of life and partaking in traditional cultural ceremonies with their children were understood as very significant for the participants.

Embracing "Mohawk Ways" and Partaking in Cultural Ceremonies

Josie described how her mother and maternal grandparents transmitted their "way of life" by modelling positivity, which she then transmitted to her own children.

> *For me politeness and the way of life are important and to try to do everything in a positive sense. Because we transmit our energy, we try to do it a respectful sense. I think that's the one thing that was the strongest point with my grandparents and my mom. It's the one thing, no matter how we got carried away from the culture, we always kept that in mind. It helped because I remember while my children were growing up they went together in the same school. I remember the principal and the teachers saying my kids were so polite and well mannered and very respectful. For me, it was flattering because I saw that I did carry that through with them. I transmitted that to them and it was part of our way of life. What my parents and grandparents brought over to me, I carried down to my children.* (Josie)

All of the participants spoke of embracing the "Mohawk way," which are the traditional values and worldviews of their ancestors. Garrett and Walkingstick Garrett (1994) stated common worldview for Native Americans is that there is a "sacred relationship with the universe that is to be honored. All things are connected, all things have life, and all things are worthy of respect and reverence" (p. 137). Moreover, the authors described Native American values and beliefs as including "sharing, cooperation, being, the group and the extended family, non-interference, harmony with nature, a time orientation toward living in the present, preference for explanation of natural phenomena according to the supernatural, and a deep respect for elders" (Garrett and Walkingstick Garrettt, 2014, p. 134). Our participants portrayed their Mohawk extended families as nurturing such spiritual beliefs and values. The

participants reported strongly identifying with these beliefs, much more so than Christian ways. They wish to instill such principles in their own children. For example, when Vanessa was young she resisted her parents' attempts to integrate her into the Jehovah's Witnesses religion. She explained, "They try to push it on you when you are about 13 because it's not like other religions where you are baptized into it. You choose when you want to get baptized. And I was like "No man, this isn't for me." At 14, she started going to the longhouse and found her spiritual home there.

> *I was like, okay, this other stuff is bogus (referring to parent's religion). But the longhouse is nice. It's not about pushing something down your throat and making you believe something. It's just about nature and being grateful for it. So say you're grateful for it. It's so basic and it's so simple. It's nice because you go and the kids will respond to it and have a good time. Which you don't hear ever about people going to church. [Rolls eyes, sounds of exasperation] I could drop off my son in the morning at the longhouse, go do what I have to do and come back and he would be sitting there totally listening and totally into it or up in the middle singing with the men. So I'm like, this is awesome. This is so good.* (Vanessa)

Vanessa described several ceremonies that take place in the community throughout the year (the mid-winter festival, baby-naming days, the peach pit game in the longhouse, the Wáhta festival, the strawberry festival, the green bean and corn festival, and the Hadúi ceremonies). It is meaningful for Vanessa to partake in the longhouse ceremonies with her son, and she often brings other children from the community to tag along when their parents are busy. She said, "I always bring other kids with me to because I want them to know." She wants the children to have an appreciation of their Indigenous heritage and to be proud of their roots. Sarah also associates very much with the Mohawk beliefs and wishes to transmit the teachings to her daughter. When Sarah gave birth, she requested that they keep her placenta for her to bury it on their land. Sarah explained this tradition is common in Mohawk culture,

> *That's (burying the placenta) part of our culture, to tie them to the land. The hospital in Châteaugay knows that a lot of people from Kahnawà:ke have their babies there and they know that they will ask for it... The Mohawk ways make more sense to me. That's why I get frustrated with the fact that a lot of people don't think I belong there when I really truly do care about that part of who I am and wish it would be stronger all around.* (Sarah)

When Kayla's grandfather passed away, her grandmother brought her to the longhouse for a Hadúi smudging ceremony, which she described below:

> *When my grandfather passed, I remember going to longhouse with my grandmother and we did a ceremony for her there, and I remember that being a really profound moment for me. I was just floored going in there. It was a Hadúi smudging. It is a special smudge. The Hadúi (also called False Face) society is a secret society of mask wearers. They are there to do very special ceremony. They don't do it for everyone. It's a Mohawk custom. You can look it up, the false face rituals. My grandmother had a Hadúi spirit attached to her so she had to go through this ceremony. It was really special to witness that. (Kayla)*

As she said, being a witness of this ceremony was a defining moment in Kayla's life. It was the start of her own cultural exploration. With maturity, she said she became increasingly interested in learning more about the culture and the various ceremonies. She took classes to learn the traditional dances, beadwork, and she also makes traditional costumes (regalia) that are worn at Pow Wows. Today, she is proud of her mixed heritage but she says identifies much more with Native customs and is actively learning about her culture to teach her own daughter when she gets older. As she stated,

> *I'm mixed and I think I am an interesting person. I have different stories to tell people and a broader worldview. I have two kickass cultures that I can learn from. It's pretty awesome and I don't think I was a mistake. I don't think I am non-Native. I identify 100% stronger as a Native woman than as a (...) woman. I mean it's still a part of me, but all of my cultural and spiritual views, my worldviews, are very structured in Iroquois customs and traditions.* (Kayla)

At the time of the interview, Kahnawà:ke was celebrating their 25th annual Pow Wow. This event was often repeated as being a significant gathering occasion for the participants and their children to appreciate the traditional dances and songs. Kayla danced at two different Pow Wows, which she described as being "really profound spiritual experiences" that she was happy to share with her daughter.

> *I think the Pow Wow has been great for that because you meet so many people from different nations and of all ages and some people are so young. If you watch the traditional dancers, it's so moving. You share these customs with people, and stories. You get to learn all these teachings. It's so special and you get to see it. There is not just the Mohawk nation, there are many nations that are happy to share and that's beautiful.* (Kayla)

Josie has been participating in the Pow Wow weekend every year since 1990. She sees old friends and family members, and she says that Pow Wow weekend is where she finds a sense of belonging. Rachel and her family also attend the Pow Wow every year, and she described her youngest son as being very interested in Mohawk culture; he enjoys going to this event very much. She said, "there's something about the Mohawkness that he likes." Rachel said her eldest son hates going to Pow Wow, and that he is more preoccupied with educational and social justice issues. Rachel does not force the culture on her children. Instead, she introduces them to the culture and they can decide to revisit it when they get older. Rachel encourages to be themselves and be true to who they are, which is essentially what her mother did when Rachel was young.

> *I think and I hope that I'm doing what my mother did, which is just sort of letting them soak in being Mohawk and not having to think. Because I don't believe that you have to speak Mohawk to be Mohawk or you have to practice a certain religion to be Mohawk, or you have to have a certain amount of blood even. It's sort of like pillars, I dont know, if you have… 4 out 5, or 3 out of 5, or 7 out of 20. You know what I'm saying? But you can't check off all the boxes, but I don't think you need to try to check off all these boxes to be a real Mohawk. You know? I just AM a real Mohawk.* (Rachel)

CHAPTER 6 - DISCUSSION: Who do *you* think you are?

I remained silent the entire summer when evictions were happening. I didn't say anything about the evictions, and I unfriended a lot of people on Facebook. My little form of silent protest is that I started taking Fancy Shawl dance classes (traditional dance) with a friend of mine who is a Pow Wow dancer. I constructed all my regalia (costume) this winter and I danced in the Pow Wow for the first time this summer. I held my baby in the circle and I held my head high. You see people who are like, "who do you think you are?" If I had to sum up my whole experience in Kahnawà:ke, it would be "Who do you think you are?" At one point, rather than respond with negativity, its just like, this is who I am. What are you going to do about it? Are you dancing? No. Are you going to take my shawl away? No. You can't do any of that stuff. I still have access to my culture, I'm still here, and I AM a Mohawk woman. I am doing my job and I am sharing this with my daughter. That's kind of it. That's the whole idea for Pow Wow, you're dancing and praying for those who can't dance. It's a healing dance… And that's the whole thing. Our community needs to heal, we need to heal, I need to heal. There's so much that needs to happen, and you're just like okay, "I'm going to dance for myself, for the drum, for others." It's so simple and it's so beautiful. It's amazing. It's the best feeling I think I've ever had. Who knows, I'm going to continue to share and maybe someday I will get my daughter to dance with me. That would be really really really cool!

(Kayla)

The Kahnawà:ke membership and residency law came into effect in 1984, specifying that mixed couples married or living common law after 1981 were no longer eligible for membership in the community and would have to vacate the territory. As a result, many mixed couples and their children have had no other choice but to settle outside of Kahnawà:ke. This issue is complicated by the fact that in the minds of most Mohawks, the First Nations reserve of Kahnawà:ke is a separate entity from the rest of Canada. Thus, for those mixed children who are forced to live outside the border of their Native land, finding a sense of belonging is much more challenging.

To expand the knowledge about some of the experiences of mixed couples' children from Kahnawà:ke, the present study explored how they define their cultural identity and belonging, as well as the factors that facilitate or mitigate their sense of identity. We explored

if and how Mohawk culture is perpetuated intergenerationally in mixed Mohawk families and the practices and attitudes employed by our participants in relation to the transmission of culture to future generations. Recall that one of the arguments for the Kahnawà:ke Mohawk membership law is the preservation of cultural identity of the people. The results from this study suggest that assimilation is not synonymous with mixed couples living together. In fact, Mohawk cultural identity and ways of life are perpetuated in these families.

The impact of geographical location was discussed as being an important factor that made a difference on the participants' sense of cultural identity and belonging. Three participants grew up on the reserve, and three grew up in the neighbouring town of Châteauguay. We saw that growing up on the reserve allowed for more opportunities to be in contact with their culture. It also provided more occasions to nurture daily relational and affective ties with other Mohawks, which appeared to be a meaningful component to the sense of identity and belonging for all the participants. Recall the example of Vanessa, who lived in Kahnawà:ke all her life. She reported never questioning her Mohawk identity and sense of belonging because she said "she always knew everybody in town." Rachel and Josie grew up outside of the reserve and felt that living in Kahnawà:ke would have helped them to know more Mohawks outside of their family; perhaps it would have allowed them to feel more a part of the community when they were young. This is in line with the study conducted by Gonzales-Backen (2013), who suggested that the ethnic composition of mixed-race people's community environment can have a strong impact on their ethnic identity formation. As per the authors, "In the case of biethnic identity formation, the ethnic makeup of one's peer group, school, and other nonfamilial microlevel settings can serve to encourage ethnic identity formation and integration or can impede this formation by restricting motivation or opportunities to explore one or more ethnic heritage" (Gonzales-Backen, 2013, p. 101).

Moreover, the participants who grew up in Châteauguay spoke of their mother's longing to be be back "home" in Kahnawà:ke. They spoke of a sense of injustice and sadness their families experienced for not being allowed to live on their reserve with their maternal extended family. Their relocation to Châteauguay suggests an obvious emotional attachment to their land, their community, and their extended family. Despite being excluded from the community, the parents wanted their children to be in contact with their culture and to have

frequent interactions with their Mohawk relatives and grandparents who live in Kahnawà:ke. The mixed couples in Meintel and Le Gall (2014) also consciously chose to reside near their extended family to maintain frequent contacts and to facilitate the transmission of culture. As per the authors, "La proximité résidentielle facilite la densité des relations avec les proches. Ainsi, les rencontres conservent un rythme plus soutenu lorsque la résidence des parents se situe à moins de quelques kilomètres de celles du couples mixte" (p. 113). The overall trend was that the participants felt more connected to the Mohawk side of their family because their parents made it a point to maintain strong ties with their Mohawk family and they wished to instill typical Mohawk values. Similarly, participants in Leblanc's study on mixed Armenian and non-Armenian individuals' ethnic identity choices described that frequent physical contact with Armenian relatives, especially grandparents, created a greater affinity with that side of the family. In this study, the extended Mohawk family made efforts to include them and kept them involved with the community. The love and support provided by elder members of the maternal family, especially grandparents, were important for building self-esteem and transmitting a sense of pride to them when the participants were children. Moreover, the Mohawk women in the family and other Mohawk women met in the breastfeeding group were described as taking on the traditional role of Iroquois woman, such that they were role-models and transmitted positive attitudinal influences. The participants described these meaningful encounters as helping them to foster a stronger sense of Mohawk identity and solidarity.

You may recall Park's assimilation theory, which assumed that the person from the subordinate group in the mixed couple fuses into the dominant partner's culture and "gives up" his or her culture of origin in the process. The assimilation theory also suggested that mixed children will automatically assimilate into society's dominant group. The results from this study demonstrate that this could not be more untrue. The participants' accounts challenge the argument that assimilation and the loss of cultural identity are inevitable in mixed-race couples and for mixed-race children. In actual fact, this study demonstrates that the participants' Aboriginal heritage and Mohawk ways were prized more than the dominant culture. Moreover, the women in this study did not experience their mixed identity in the pathological and rigid manner described by Park and Stonequist's (1931, 1935) marginal man theory. While they did not speak of going through an identity crisis as suggested by the

marginal man theory, most of the participants did report some periods of self-questioning and feelings of not belonging, especially during childhood and adolescence when they were made aware of their differences by peers inside and outside of the community. Discrimination based on physical appearance was a regular occurrence for the participants when they were young. The participants with Caucasian physical features reported incidents of being bullied and teased by people in the community because of their white physical appearance. Some of their experiences were in line with Lawrence (2004), who described the pressures faced by urban mixed-bloods Natives who look white because they do not fit the stereotypical Indian:

> Most urban mixed-bloods have therefore had to contend, at some point in their lives, with the fact that they do not fit the models of what has been held up to them - by whites - as authentic Nativeness. The response of many individuals has been to struggle to measure up to the images before them and to feel their identities tainted and diminished because they cannot be the "real Indians" they feel they are supposed to be. (Lawrence, 2004, p. 135)

Because they self-identify as Native, our participants's experiences with of being misrecognized as white were sometimes upsetting and damaging for their self-esteem when they were young. Moreover, our participants described going through "double-marginalization,", which is receiving racism and being ostracisized for not being "Mohawk enough" within the community, but also receiving differential treatments outside of the reservation because of their minority status. Their experiences with discrimination sometimes led to isolation and self-doubt, but the participants overcame these negative experiences early in their life with the help of their parents and extended maternal family's positive influence and by practicing self-acceptance.

As we have seen earlier, political events have impacted the Mohawk people's relationship with the rest of Quebec and Canada. The legacy of colonial dispossession, blood memory passed down intergenerationally, as well as contemporary political events such as the Oka Crisis, worked on reinforcing some community members' mistrust and contempt towards the dominant Quebecois and Canadian society. Such political tensions have added to the community's fear of cultural disappearance, and they have influenced the implementation and maintenance of the membership rule and blood quantum. These laws created divisiveness within the community and a tense climate on the reserve, and have had direct impacts on the lives of children of mixed couples who are often caught in between and find themselves

targeted by racist sentiments. In the excerpt below Sarah describes her point of view on the membership and residency laws and how it has personally affected her life:

> *I had a number of people who don't think I belong there (Kahnawà:ke), even though… you know there is "marrying out," but there is also "marrying back in." Some people still don't think I belong there. They say, "oh, we lose people when you marry out," but when you marry back in, some people still have the same attitude… Why does it have to be hurtful? It's like, "oh, you're a Mohawk of Kahnawà:ke on your band card, but not good enough for here. I almost feel like they are going to repeadtly do something like that to people who had no bearing on who they are. I wasn't there when my parents met. I didn't tell my mom to marry my dad. I am a by-product of that. But they won't let me forget my mom's "mistake," quote-unquote, I don't think it's a mistake obviously. But that's the way I feel like they are treating it. That's how I feel about it. You know there are some people there who couldn't give two craps about who they are or what it means to be Mohawk or who are on the membership list and moved away and don't care to ever come back. Then there are people who aren't on the membership list and who care very much, like me. It's not easy when it's somewhere where you want to be. I care about our culture, and this is where I want to be. So I find that the law needs some adjusting, and where I have a problem is, say a Mohawk woman marries a non-Native and she has three kids and you are evicting them. You are evicting them because of one non-Mohawk person, but really you are losing four Mohawks. Because you are evicting her and her children. Some of them wont come back, some of them will take the route like my brother and my mother and say, "I'm okay, you don't want me, I don't want you." Then there's some who are like me and who will come back. But when you push them away, there's a big chance that they won't want to come back—because that hurts.* (Sarah)

In bearing witness to their mothers' painful experiences with membership and having gone through their own feelings of not belonging in the community, the participants are more aware of the effects of the membership law on families, so they are committed in trying to influence change in the community.

Furthermore, important life events were key moments in the participants' lives that worked to reinforce their own cultural identity. Some participants suggested that becoming a mother had provoked the desire to transmit their Mohawk cultural heritage to their children. It made them think about what they aspired to in terms of their children's identity and future.

Similar to many mixed-race participants in Song and O'Neill Gutierrez's study, our participants are concerned with "keeping the story alive" and transmitting cultural knowledge and an emotional connection to their Native ancestry to their offspring. The participants have

been proactive in countering dilution by making efforts to perpetuate their culture in the everyday socialization of their children. At the same time, they encourage cultural diversity and a cosmopolitan ethos. Our study's findings also concur with the research done by Meintel et al. (2000) on mixed couples'aspirations for their children's identity and their parenting practices. However, the focus of our study was on the mixed children's transmission of culture and identity to their own children, Meintel et al. focused on the mixed couples' transmission of culture.

As discussed in the literature review, the legacy of colonization and the Indian Act impacted the daily aspects of Native peoples' lives and culture. We have shown that assimilation policies have effectively severed the transmission of culture and language in Native families for two generations. As a result, culture was not passed down intergenerationally, and many Native people lost their language. Today, Native communities are trying to go back to tradition and revitalize their language and other aspects of their culture. The participants in this study want their children to have every learning opportunity that they lacked while growing up. They spoke of various Mohawk language learning courses offered in the community. Four of the participants reported participating in these classes, and two participants make use of technology to learn and practice the language at home. Some of the women are learning Mohawk at the same time as their own children. For example, Vanessa is very committed to learning the language and giving her son every opportunity to learn about his culture, which she lacked when she was young. She feels it is her job to put in place the tools to build a strong sense of identity; when her son grows older he can decide which aspects of the culture he wants to keep. As per Vanessa:

> *It's more about building your children to be strong-charactered people and to know who they are. Like for my son, he knows who he is. He knows his identity so people can say whatever they want to him about me. I understand people are saying that they are trying to protect the culture, but I think it's a load of crap because you could be… like, look, the speaker in the longhouse is half and he is a better speaker than some of these full Native guys. We've lost the fact that it's not about blood quantum. It's about being who you are, what you carry with you and what knowledge you have with you.* (Vanessa)

The participants try to transmit as many "cultural resources" as possible to their children, so they could choose from a variety of cultural markers when they mature. For

example, the women in our study purposely enroll their children in daycares and schools with curriculums on Indigenous education, they insist on choosing names for their children that symbolize a collective affiliation with their Mohawk heritage (Caballero and Edwards 2008), they attend various culturally significant ceremonies within and outside the community, they talk to their children about Aboriginal social justice issues, etc. What is interesting is that the transmission of culture is not limited to sharing only with their children; it has wider implications as they share knowledge with other youths in the community and with society at large. As we have seen, every one of these women is actively engaged in one way or another in perpetuating Mohawk culture to future generations, which gives them meaning and helps to strengthen their own Mohawk identity and sense of belonging in the process. Whether it be by volunteering in schools to promote Indigenous education, learning the traditional dances to teach them in the future, participating in the Pow Wow and other cultural events with children in the community, creating age-appropriate programs for Indigenous children in daycares, making Indigenous art and jewellery, mentoring adolescents in the community, or participating in social justice issues for Aboriginals, all the women share a strong sense of commitment and are involved in giving back to their community.

As was demonstrated, the women have a rich sense of identity that evolved over time and with the influence of the various positive and negative experiences they underwent as individuals and as part of the collective (for example, discrimination, the birth of a child, the death of a loved one, political events, etc.). Today, they embrace their dual heritage, but without a doubt they call themselves Mohawk first. Despite and federal and local definitions of their identity and people telling them they do not belong, these women make tenacious efforts to re-appropriate their culture and find ways to create a space of belonging. While their reserve may not claim them as members, they have taken a position, choosing to transcend the invisible border, to contribute and be a part of the community. Moreover, by taking steps to reappropriate their history and culture, and by sharing it with their children and other youths, they are not only empowering the next generation, but they are also empowering themselves as Mohawk women. These women practice the true meaning of cultural transmission, and without a doubt, they are self-affirming, embodying, and taking on their role as Mohawk women. This, is who *they* are.

CONCLUSION

The present thesis examines the interplay between mixed identity and the transmission of culture in an Indigenous setting, an area of research where little work has been done before. As demonstrated, the study of mixed-race Mohawk people from Kahnawà:ke differs from other mixed-race groups because it is complicated by the political, legal, and historical context of the population.

In this study, we have shown that identity includes all that one has encountered individually as well as collectively (the Indian Act, residential schools, the sixties scoop, the Oka Crisis, membership laws, etc). It is a combination of one's nurturing and alienating experiences. Moreover, identity is constantly evolving and never fixed, which fosters hope at the individual and macro societal levels. For as long as groups have existed, there has been, and will always be, attempts from enforcers try to impose a structure on a complex situation to regulate the groups, as well as the behaviour of individual members. There is no way to avoid the inevitable, but the participants in this study have described valuable attempts at co-existing and transcending the invisible borders and laws that exist within their community. Clearly, they do not accept anybody else's definition of what it means to be Mohawk; instead, they are creating their own space and taking charge of what it means for *them* to be Mohawk. They are not passive in their identity and instead of being defined by it, they describe each in their own way how they construct their own set of realities.

There are conflicts and power differentials in every society and there will never be a state of absolute and complete utopia where harmony reigns. But having a voice to express what does not work is an important step in working towards positive change. In this study, we have shown that engaging in the process of personal meaning-making practices can foster human resilience. As a result, one no longer feels alone, and no invisible border can restrict one's ability to access their culture when it is recognized as such. Once recognized, one is free to choose their own path to nurture their sense of self and strengthen their cultural identity and sense of belonging. In doing so for oneself, one is disposed to facilitate and influence the transmission of culture and identity to the next generation, which the participants in this study have described doing in various ways.

This study points to the robust methodology of semi-structured interviews to facilitate the narration of lived experiences and the integration of meaning. It is by engaging with more subjects that we can draw deeper knowledge on the experiences of mixed Mohawk individuals. This speaks to the merits of further research with larger samples. The questions "Who are you?" and "What are you?" pertain to all human beings. But while questions of identity affect every single one of us, some deal with them with ease, and others have more disturbed and convoluted reactions. Experiences with discrimination, marginalization, and oppression are injurious and require the integration of a process of healing and education. By necessity, healing and education must be done within the recognition, validation, and support of the community. This study shows that individuals take it upon themselves to pursue this vital role to help themselves and others in affirming their cultural identity and sense of belonging. Further research could be done to understand how members of the community can maximize efforts to reach out to those Mohawks who are living outside of the reserve and who feel they have little or no access to their culture. Future studies can explore how making links with other Mohawks beyond one's family can perhaps help in the transmission of cultural identity.

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Appendix A: Information and Consent Form

Project Title: Mixed Identity and Cultural Transmission: Narratives of Mixed-Blood Women from a First Nations Community.

Please take a few moments to read this consent form carefully. It should give you a description of what your participation will involve.

Who am I?

My name is Emilie Chow and I am a Master's student in the Department of Sociology at Université de Montréal. My research supervisors are Marianne Kempeneers (professor in sociology) and Josiane Le Gall (anthropology).

What is this study about?

Using semi-structured interviews, this study aims to understand the experiences of mixed Mohawk women and their sense of cultural identity and belonging. Furthermore, we will explore the transmission of Mohawk cultural identity from one generation to the next.

Participation:

- The participants for this project are women over 18 years of age that have a mother who is Mohawk from Kahnawà:ke and a non-Native father.
- Your participation will consist of an interview that is scheduled to last an hour to an hour and a half.
- You are not required to answer questions that you do not feel comfortable to discuss.
- Participation is voluntary, which means that you can withdraw from the study at any time without any negative repercussions. **(*If you choose to withdraw from the study and would also like the data to be destroyed, you must inform me of this request.)**

Confidentiality:

- If you choose to participate in the study, the interview will be taped on a digital recorder and transcribed on paper for the purpose of data analysis. The transcriptions will be read by my research supervisors and myself.
- The records of the interview will be kept in a password-protected computer with hardware encryption and a locked file cabinet accessible only by myself.
- This Master's project will be published and the general results of my research may be presented at conferences.
- Direct quotations from the interview will be used in the publication of my research project. I will ensure to report accurately what will be discussed in the interview. Your name and any identifying information will be changed to protect your identity

- If you wish to review the quotations from the interview that I intend to use in my project, please inform me of this request. I will gladly schedule a time to meet you again and we will go over the excerpts together.

Limits to confidentiality:

- Keeping confidentiality is of prime importance to the researcher and all efforts will be made to protect the anonymity of the participants. However, please note that the participants for this research project have been selected from a small sample of people, some of whom may know each other. I will ensure to protect your identity by giving you a pseudonym and by modifying any identifying information. I cannot guarantee that you will not be identifiable to people who know you on the basis of what you have said.

As previously stated, you are free to withdraw from the study at any point. If you have any other questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me by telephone (514) 267-2424 or by email emilie.chow@umontreal.ca. You may also contact my research director Marianne Kempeneers by telephone (514) 343-5772 or by email marianne.kempeneers@umontreal.ca

This research project was approved by the research ethics comity at the Université de Montréal. Should you have any additional questions regarding your involvement in this research, you may contact the comity by telephone (514) 343-7338 or by email ceras@umontreal.ca. If you have any complaints regarding your participation in this research, you may contact the Université de Montréal ombudsman by telephone (514) 343-2100 or by email ombudsman@umontreal.ca

Participant's Consent:

- I have read the above information.
- I have received answers to any question I have asked and I understand what my participation in this research project entails.

Researcher's engagement:

- I have clearly explained what you can expect from your participation.
- I have adequately answered your questions and/or concerns about the study.
- I have informed you of your right to remove yourself from the study at anytime.

Name of the participant (In print):
Date and Signature of the participant: Date and Signature of the researcher:

***NB. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.**

Appendix B: Demographic Form

Before we begin the interview, please take a few minutes to complete this information form and the family tree to the best of your knowledge.

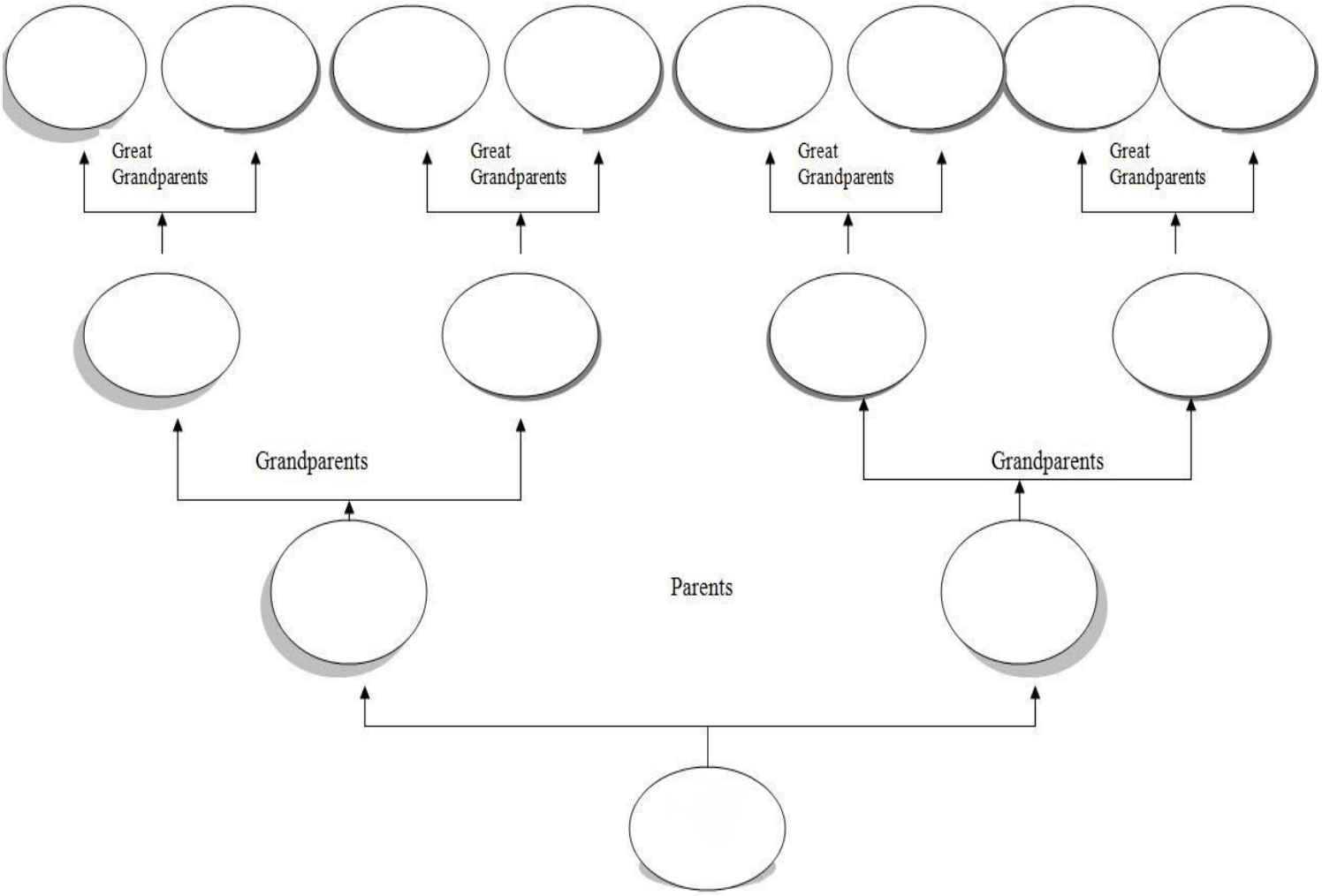
Participant:

- Date of Birth:
- Birth Place:
- What city do you currently live in?
- Relationship Status (single, common law, married, etc):
- Do you have any children? If yes, how many?
- What is the highest level of education that you have completed?
- What is your current occupation?
- Pseudonym you would like to use for my research project?

Parents:

- Age of your parents: Mother: Father:
- Do your parents reside together?
- Where do your parents currently live?
- What is the highest level of education completed by your parents?
  Mother: Father:

Appendix C: Family Tree



Appendix D: Interview Guide

Parent's Story:

1. Where were your parents born?
2. Where did they grow up?
3. Can you explain the story of how your parents met?
4. Are your parents married? Yes/No
5. Can you talk to me about their wedding ceremony?
   - Where did it take place?
   - Was it a religious ceremony?
   - Did both sides of the extended family join the celebration?
6. Do you know if your extended family was ever opposed to your parent's union?
   - If so: Can you give examples of situation(s) on your mother's side?
   - If so: Can you give examples of situation(s) on your father's side?
7. Did your parents ever live together in Kahnawake? When did they leave and why?
8. Did your parents ever talk to you about challenges they faced with community members while they were dating and/or when they were married? If so, can you please elaborate on this?

Childhood Memories:

School and peers:

1. Where did you go to grade school and high school?
   - Can you describe what was your experience like in school?
   - Do you think that your experiences in school facilitated or impeded your sense of belonging to the community Can you expand on this?
2. Can you briefly describe what your social network looked like while growing up? Did you have many Native friends? What does your current social network look like?
3. Growing up, can you talk about some of your hobbies? What would you do that you considered being passionate about?

Immediate Family and Extended Family:

1. Where did you grow up?

- How many siblings do you have? Can you briefly describe your family life while growing up?
- Considering that in the literature, Mohawk women are described as being responsible for the transmission of cultural identity: Can you expand on what you were you taught by the women in your family? E.g. family values. How are these values linked to your world views in the present day?

2. When you were a child, did your maternal grandparents reside in Kahnawake?

- If so, how often would you contact them or visit them and under which circumstances?

3. Do you still have family members that reside in Kahnawake (grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc)?

- If so, how often are you in contact with them and can you briefly describe your relationship with them when you were growing up and now?

4. Can you talk about your family relationships on your father's side?

5. Is there a side of the family that you contact more often or that you feel closer to? If so, what do you think are some of the factors that contribute to you feeling closer to one side compare to the other?

Holidays and Family Events:

1. When you were a child, which holidays, ceremonies, or social events were celebrated in your family? Can you describe how these were celebrated in your family and who attended (on both sides)? For example:

- Christian holidays: Christmas, Easter.
- National holidays: St-Jean-Baptiste, Canada day.
- Mohawk events, dances: Pow Wow, Feast for the Dead, Naming ceremony Thunder Dance, Medicine & Seed Festival, Harvest Festival and the End of Season Feast.

2. Which holidays, ceremonies, or social events do you celebrate now?

- How do you celebrate these and with whom?
- Is it important for you to celebrate these with your children (if applicable)?

Critical Events:

1. As you look back at your childhood, can you think of any life changing events, experiences, or struggles (e.g. illness, death, significant turning point, etc) either from your own experiences or related to your family of origin?

- Can you tell me whether you think these turning point moments could have affected your sense of belonging to the community as a mixed Mohawk woman?

Discrimination:

1. Have you ever been asked « what are you » or « where are you from »? How do you react to it?

2. When you were growing up, did people pass comments on your family because your parents were from different ethnic backgrounds?

- If so, can you give an example of a particular situation and briefly describe how it made you feel?

3. Have you ever experienced any discrimination because of your physical appearance or skin color?

- If so, can you describe a situation and how it made you feel?

The factors that we talked about in this section (school and peers, immediate and extended family, holidays and family events, critical events, and discrimination) are believed to contribute in constructing our sense of cultural identity. Some of the factors that we talked about may or may not have been relevant to you. Can you think of other factors that may have facilitated or impaired your sense of cultural identity?

Cultural Transmission:

Meal preparation:

1. When you were growing up, did you eat traditional Mohawk meals? If so, can you give examples of the type of food prepared?

- How often would you eat traditional meals while growing up?

- Do you cook these types of meals now for your family?

Language:

1. How many languages do you speak? (please name them)

- If the participant speaks Mohawk: Where did you learn it? How important was it for your parents that you learn the Mohawk language? Can you expand on this?
- If the participant does not speak Mohawk: How do you feel about not speaking the Mohawk language? Can you expand on this?
- If participant has children: Are your children in contact with the Mohawk language? In which context and with whom do they speak it? Is it important for you that your children speak Mohawk? Can you expand on this?
- If participant does not have children: Would you have liked that your own children to learn the Mohawk language? Can you expand on this?

Name:

1. If participant has a Mohawk name: Who named you? Do you know the meaning behind your name?

2. If participant has children: Did you give your children Mohawk names? If yes, why?

Religion/Spirituality:

1. Which religion(s) do/did your parents and grandparent practice?

2. Do you adhere to a particular religion or spiritual beliefs?

- What does your practice look like? How is it integrated in your life and what meaning does religion/spirituality hold for you? Can you expand on this?

3. Which religion/spiritual beliefs did you/will you transmit to your own children? And Why?

Now that we have finished this section and that we looked at cultural transmission through the use of meal preparation, language, name, and religion/spirituality, can you think of other cultural traditions that have been passed down from your mother's family that you think are important and that you will choose to transmit to your own children? Please elaborate why these are important to you.

Mixed Couples and Membership issue:

1. Was dating difficult for you while growing up? Has your mother or your Native family ever expressed their preference for you to marry a Native person?

2. After what has been presented in the media on mixed marriages and with your own experience as a child from a mixed union, in what ways has it or would it somehow affect your views on who your kids choose to form a partnership with? Can you expand on this?

3. Can you share your opinion on the membership law on mixed marriages? (Researcher will explain the laws to the participant if needed). Do you think these laws are necessary? Why/why not?

4. According to the band council, the argument for enforcing the marry out stay out rule is not about excluding non-Native people, but rather about preserving Mohawk land, identity and culture. What are your thoughts on this?

5. What does being a mixed woman mean to you now? Can you expand? Where or with whom do you feel like you most belong?

Before we conclude the interview, can you think of resources or programs in schools or community centers that were missing when you were younger and could be helpful for mixed children for the construction of their cultural identity and to support mixed families in the transmission of Mohawk culture now? Can you expand on this?

*Is there anything else you would like to share with me?

Thank you for taking the time to participate in our study!