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Community Report

Research Project

*Roots of Resilience: Stories of Resilience, Healing,
and Transformation in Kahnawake*

Funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)



NETWORK FOR ABORIGINAL MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH
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Community Report

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Roots of Resilience: Stories of Resilience, Healing, and Transformation in Kahnawake

prepared for

the Kanien'kehá:ka community of Kahnawake and
the Network for Aboriginal Mental Health Research of
the Culture & Mental Health Research Unit

www.namhr.ca

www.mcgill.ca/resilience/

by

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"We're still here..."

(personal narratives and focus groups,
Roots of Resilience Project 2007-2009)

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Hôpital général juif
Jewish General Hospital

Roots of Resilience: Stories of Resilience, Healing, and Transformation

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FOREWORD

"How a person, or a group of people adapt to, and get through life's challenges."

When the Roots of Resilience project was first introduced to Kahnawake, some people, especially elderly participants, were not familiar with the word "resilience", they were however quite familiar with the concept of resilience. Therefore, as researchers, our first task was to ensure that people understood what we meant by the term. Our next task was to get the community talking about it.

I joined the Roots of Resilience project research team in June of 2007 as a community researcher and student who, at the time, was completing a bachelor's degree in anthropology at Concordia. The project intrigued me because it represented a unique way of doing research. It promised to look at the positive aspects of Indigenous peoples across Canada, a form of research that I was not accustomed to, to create a framework for research that is lacking in Indigenous related research projects. These kinds of projects help our communities move forward in a positive way.

Being an Indigenous academic and having previously worked with different research projects, including the Kahnawake Schools Diabetes Prevention Project (KSDPP), I was well aware of the stigma attached to research and researchers. Like most Indigenous communities, Kahnawake is still weary of the prying eyes of researchers, whether local or non-local. Indigenous peoples of North America have endured being under the microscope for many decades. Much of the research involving our peoples has unfortunately focused on the negative. In spite of the negative things that are written about us, the good thing is that many of our communities are thriving, and we have many successful people who are willing to share their stories!

In my view, the *Roots of Resilience: Stories of Resilience, Healing and Transformation* project is an example of a successful collaboration between community and academics. Coordinated by internationally-known researchers and guided by

local expertise, the project developed a trusting and mutually-beneficial relationship, to bridge the academic-community gap.

I am grateful to have been a part of this project as well as the Network for Aboriginal Mental Health Research (NAMHR: www.namhr.ca). NAMHR collaborates with community-based researchers, mental health providers, and Aboriginal organizations and aims to build research capacity to address the mental health needs of Canada's Indigenous peoples. What I learned confirmed much of what I know about Kahnawakehró:non, that we're resilient people, and that we have so many talented, strong, determined



individuals whose efforts and opinions have been influenced by past generations. *"We're still here"* despite the many challenges that our community has faced over the past few hundred years, especially the loss of life during the Quebec Bridge Disaster on August 29, 1907, the loss of our riverfront, and the hardships during the Oka Crisis of 1990. I hope that future research continues to build on the positive aspects highlighted by this project and that we can work towards working to build a better community by empowering each other and being proud of our identity as onkwehónwe people. I look forward to getting feedback about this project from Kahnawakehró:non!

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SUMMARY

"The story and the story teller both serve to connect the past with the future, one generation with the other, the land with the people and the people with the story."

Linda Tuhiwai Smith, 1999¹

This report brings to you, the community, a detailed account and results of a research project that Kahnawake participated in from 2007-2012. It describes how some Kahnawa'kehró:non of different generations view, live and communicate resilience amongst different generations. Like many Indigenous

Social Services Research Council (OHSSRC). A local Community Advisory Group (CAG) made up of four community members was instrumental in guiding the research throughout the project.

From 2007 to 2009, narratives of resilience, or "getting through challenges" were gathered in Kahnawake through interviews. Our goal was to gather people's narratives on how they got through challenges, to identify *shared* and *distinct* aspects of past, current, and future resilience. For this we interviewed five key informants, conducted six focus groups, and spoke with twenty individuals. In total, we had in-depth discussions on resilience with 54 people from Kahnawake. With the help of a Community Advisory Group, we divided our 54 participants into four different "generational" categories: youth (16-21), young adults (22-39), adults (40-64), and elders (65 and older). These generational categories enabled us to investigate the shared and distinct aspects of resilience across generations.



communities, throughout our history, Kahnawake has faced and survived many challenges. These challenges may have hurt us, deterred us, oppressed us, or made our lives more difficult, but "we're still here". The underlying aim of the *Stories of Resilience, Transformation and Healing in Kahnawake* project was to gather stories about what has helped us "be here today" as proud Kahnawa'kehró:non.

This project adopted a community-based participatory research framework through a collaborative partnership between the Network for Aboriginal Mental Health Research (NAMHR) and the Onkwata'karitáhtshera Kahnawake Health and

A qualitative approach was used to analyse the results. Qualitative research is a method of research that is known as interpretive and explanatory; it is a field of inquiry. A qualitative researcher could be described as a journalist. As opposed to quantitative research that involves the gathering and analysing of statistics, qualitative research aims to answer questions such as "Why?" and "How?" Narrative inquiry – or the collecting of stories, fits well with this research project, as traditionally, Indigenous societies have been oral societies.

"We're still here...The government has made us resilient...[Y]eah, they tried hard but all it did was make us stronger...[W]ell they tried to assimilate us and they tried, like with residential schools and then, it just backfired on them because it only made us more resilient and more...it made our skin tougher."

Adult Focus Group, November 14, 2007





During the course of this study, a collective narrative was expressed, one involving the four following themes:

1. Distinct resilience across generations (distinct ways in which different generations view, live and communicate resilience)
2. Shared aspects of resilience across generations
3. Shift towards individualism, materialism, capitalism, and loss of "being Mohawk"
4. Reconnecting our one-mindedness, or *onkwe'nikón:ra* – a Haudenosaunee term for the process of consensus building, or an agreement of "one collective mind"

Those of you who participated in this study have collectively stated that all age groups ultimately want the same thing, that is, to work towards the wellbeing

of our community (and people) while upholding our language and culture. Many have expressed that our identity is what helps us through challenges and is the glue that helps us stick together during hardships. This recognition can possibly help us reconcile certain generational differences and bridge together different groups in order to help build on this collective energy of togetherness, not only during hardships, but also on a daily basis.

This community report highlights and shares our main research findings with the community of Kahnawake. Our aim is to create further dialogue around resilience; we call upon you to think about building and fostering resilience in Kahnawake for now and for generations to come.



OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

The *Roots of Resilience: Stories of Resilience, Healing and Transformation Research* project is part of a larger study called *Roots of Resilience: Transformations of Identity and Community in Indigenous Mental Health*, which began in 2005. This study is an interdisciplinary partnership between researchers in Canada and New Zealand funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). Dr. Laurence J. Kirmayer of the Network for Aboriginal Mental Health Research (Culture & Mental Health Research Unit) is the lead investigator of the study.



The aim of the *Stories of Resilience* project is to collect stories to help define resilience from Indigenous perspectives and to identify factors that could promote resilience among individuals and communities. We collaborated with other Indigenous nations across Canada in order to gather many different stories from different viewpoints. The participating communities are the:

- Kanien'kehá:ka of Kahnawake
- Cree of Wemindji
- Métis of Manitoba
- Mi'kmaq of Eskasoni
- Inuit of Kinngait (Cape Dorset), and Iqaluit
- Haudenosaunee of Six Nations at Ohshwéken

The main purpose of the Kahnawake portion of the Roots of Resilience Project is to:

1. Understand resilience from the point of view of Kahnawakehró:non.
2. Identify shared and distinct aspects of resilience across generations.
3. Use the insights and experiences of participants to identify potential recommendations or initiatives that can facilitate resilience and healing.

Resilience means the ability of a person or group of people, who have faced significant life challenges, to adapt to or get through these challenges, and be well in their life. As a team, we were interested in how factors at individual, family, and community levels interact with larger social and cultural factors that enable some individuals and communities to do well, while others do not. We explored factors that promote resilience in mental health amongst Kahnawakehró:non across their lifespan.



Ultimately, we hope to promote resilience by getting the community to think about identifying their own strengths and those of people around them, and to think about ways that these strengths can foster personal, family, and community wellbeing.

THE RESEARCH SETTING

Kahnawake: A historical, cultural and political context

Speaking to someone from Kahnawake in 2012, you will probably be told that the population within the territory is over 8,000. According to the Indian and



Northern Affairs Canada's Indian Registry System, as of April 2011, 7,645 people live "on reserve", while 2,272 are "off reserve". That's close to 10,000 Kanien'kehá:ka (People of the Flint) who live in or have ties to Kahnawake, one of eight Kanien'kehá:ka communities (Kanehsatá:ke, Ganienké, Ahkwesáhsne, Tyendinega, Wáhta, Ohshwéken, Kanatsioharé:ke, and Kahnawake) located in Quebec, Ontario and New York State.

The English translation of Kahnawake is "on or by the rapids", dates back to the 1600s and refers to the Lachine Rapids on the St. Lawrence River. Since 1667, Kahnawake has relocated three times from its original settlement of Kentake, known as present-day LaPrairie². The Kanien'kehá:ka established its permanent and current location at Kahnawake in 1716.

- 1667 Kentake (present-day site of LaPrairie)
- 1676 Kahnawake (present-day site of the eastern boundary of Côte-Ste-Catherine)
- 1696 Kanatakwenke (site of the of the Kahnawake Survival School)
- 1716 Kahnawake (present-day site of the village)³

Kahnawake shares with other communities many of the features, both positive and negative, of a modern

"Indian" existence⁴. The original geographical size of Kahnawake was over 40,000 acres. Today, located just a short distance south of Montreal, Kahnawake's land base has been gradually reduced to 12,000 acres due to land cessions by the Jesuits and subsequently the Department of Indian Affairs⁵, including those associated with the construction of the St. Lawrence Seaway, various bridges, railways and hydroelectric power lines.

The St. Lawrence Seaway, constructed between 1954 and 1959, had a significant impact on the community of Kahnawake, where 1,262 acres of land were expropriated to build the canal that has blocked the community's easy access to the river⁶. This is but one of several significant events in Kahnawake's history which was marked by the Quebec Bridge disaster of 1907, when 33 ironworkers from Kahnawake fell to their death. More contemporary political issues such as the changing legal definitions of community membership imposed by Canada's *Indian and Northern Affairs Indian Act of 1876*, and community issues associated with the 66-million-dollar Mercier Bridge repair by the Mohawk Bridge Consortium, are also significant. Since Kahnawake's first band council elections were held in the spring of 1889, controversy between those who continued to support a traditional (Kaianere'kó:wa) form of government and those who did not has been part of the community's political dynamics⁷.



Kahnawake is part of the Haudenosaunee, also known as Rotinonshón:ni/Hotinonshón:ni (People of the Longhouse), or Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy. We are bound together in this confederacy



consisting of the Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk), Seneca (Shotinontowane'á:ka), Onondaga (Ononta'kehá:ka), Oneida (Oneniote'á:ka), Cayuga (Kaion'kehá:ka), and Tuscarora (Tehatiskaró:ros), with an unofficial estimated population of 120,000. At one time (approximately 1600 A.D.), the Haudenosaunee inhabited the areas from Hudson Bay to the Carolinas, and from the Atlantic to the Mississippi River⁸.



According to our oral history, the Confederacy was formed over 1,000 years ago. The Peacemaker provided the people with a code of justice called the Kaianere'kó:wa, or The Great Law of Peace. His vision had all the people of the world joining hands in a way of life based on the principle that peace is the law of the land. Our worldview was based on a cosmological

belief system connecting humans with nature in a spiritual domain. Our Creation Story taught how humans came to live on Mother Earth and through the Peacemaker, gave the message of peace, power and righteousness that was to be preserved for seven generations to come -- a generation never to be seen by present generations. The intent of our "original instructions" were to make the Earth more pleasing for the habitation of humankind. The Creation Story conveys core cultural values and outlines a moral system. The extended time perspective symbolized by seven generations suggests the forward-thinking outlook common among the Haudenosaunee⁹.

The Kanien'kehá:ka are known as the Keepers of the Eastern Door because of the geographical location of our traditional homelands in the east. We are also known as the first of the Confederacy to maintain continued contacts with European society, and have had to withstand the most pressure of directed culture change among the Six Nations.



The Kanien'kehá:ka at Kahnawake were historically known for their skills as fur trappers and traders during the time they were voyageurs for the Northwest and Hudson's Bay Companies¹⁰. During the late 1800s and early 1900s, our men and women were well known for travelling across Europe and the United States, contributing to the tourism industry. This led to sometimes daring occupations such as lumbermen, river pilots, and later on the high construction ironworking trade, that the Kanien'kehá:ka were naturally skilled at.

The eradication of the riverfront, the decrease of the land base, along with other significant historical events such as the enforcement of the *Indian Act*, Canada's forced residential school system for Aboriginal people, and the Oka Crisis of 1990, have had a huge impact on the community's perspective of the world. Since the *Indian Act* was instituted, there

has been a longstanding struggle between those who strive to retain the recognition of the People of the Longhouse and the Great Law of Peace and those that have come to accept the Band Council System. Since the first settlement at Kentake in 1667 had been a Jesuit retreat, many Mohawks were converted to Catholicism, but Kahnawake was originally a Rotinonshón:ni community. Today, both the Band Council system and the Longhouse remain fully functional, often relying on each other in times of crisis.

Kahnawake today

The *Indian Act* and subsequent government policies have suppressed Kahnawake's traditional governance by prohibiting the use of the Kanien'kéha language and traditional cultural practices. The *Indian Act* also removed Kanien'kehá:ka authority over their own affairs and put it in the hands of the Minister of the Department of Indian Affairs. The community has responded to these challenges by working to revitalize language and culture, and gaining and maintaining control over health services, education, economic development, and community services while strengthening its links within the Confederacy. Membership continues to be a pressing issue and



although lifestyles have shifted along with community governance, many Kahnawakehró:non still identify with their traditional family clan system.

Those that live off reserve do so either by choice or because of gender discrimination resulting from the

Indian Act. Women lost their native rights and were expelled from reserves in Canada for marrying non-natives. In 1985, Canada implemented *Bill C-31*, which "removed gender differences by allowing women who had lost their rights through marriage to a non-native to resume their status"¹¹. The process of applying for reinstatement back into their communities began, provided that the women were divorced or widowed.

The administrative body for the community of Kahnawake consists of the Mohawk Council of Kahnawake, which has an elected Grand Chief and eleven Council members. The Mohawk Council of Kahnawake works in conjunction with eight other major institutions that provide services to the Mohawks at Kahnawake. Not all Kahnawakehró:non perceive the Mohawk Council of Kahnawake as a legitimate governing body because many of the laws accompanying the *Indian Act* continue to chip away at its inherent culture. For example, by accepting the *Indian Act* and subsequent Band Council system into the community, Kahnawake has also accepted the notion of Indian status and band members as defined by patrilineal descent, which clashes with Haudenosaunee matrilineal tradition¹². The traditional Haudenosaunee Confederacy is very much alive today and continues to defend and affirm its legitimacy in Canada and the U.S. Nevertheless, the Mohawks at Kahnawake accept Canadian law, provided it recognizes their jurisdiction in areas such as land claims, and ultimately sovereignty.

The community has its own library, Caisse Populaire, local newspaper, radiostation, cable television network, and several hundred small businesses that support the local economy. The cigarette manufacturing and retail industry has, over the past 25 years, been a major source of revenue in the community, currently employing well over 1,200 Kahnawakehró:non. Those that are employed within the major institutions earn approximately \$30,000 per year, one of the highest annual incomes per family of any other indigenous community in Canada¹³. Kahnawake's Post Secondary institute, the Kahnawake Education Center, controls all major aspects of educational services assisting over 200 post-secondary students (2011-2012) with tuition and allowance.



RESILIENCE – THE LOCAL CONTEXT

Defining Resilience

Resilience is generally defined as a person's ability to overcome stress and adversity^{14,15}. It is a construct that implies the ability to adjust positively in the face of distress and is often applied to mental health research regarding Indigenous populations. It can be seen as a process of adapting well to a difficult experience by "bouncing back" or, like bamboo, returning to its original form after being bent or compressed. The concept of resilience recognizes that many individuals and communities do well despite enduring severe hardships, trauma and deprivation¹⁶.

Over the past decades, psychologists and psychiatrists have contributed to a growing body of literature that focused on children facing development difficulties who thrived despite being categorized as vulnerable^{17,18,19,20}. The concept of "individual" resilience has grown to encompass a broader notion that involves the social, historical and cultural contexts experienced by the first peoples of Turtle Island that have survived the multiple injustices of the state over the past few centuries.

Resilience among Indigenous peoples in Canada

Michael Ungar^{21,22} has argued that standard definitions of resilience can be problematic because cultural and contextual differences are not accounted for. Studies have shown²³ for instance that loss of cultural continuity puts individuals and Indigenous communities at risk. Many communities strive to preserve and protect their culture (cultural resilience). HeavyRunner and Morris²⁴ argue that cultural resilience is a relatively new term, and in their view, Indigenous people have long practiced the concept of resilience during child rearing. For instance, the elders taught that children are gifts from the Creator and that it is the responsibility of the family and community to nurture, protect and guide the young in their journey, or process of transforming into adults. For HeavyRunner and Morris, it is

seen as a traditional process now called "fostering resilience" – "the word is new; the meaning is old." Despite the many changes that have threatened our livelihood, many Indigenous people have maintained cultural resilience through their artwork. The Inuit for example are well known for expressing their resilience through their contemporary artwork that addresses the Inuit residential school experience, colonialism and Christianity in the Arctic²⁵.

Recent discourse on Aboriginal resilience theories emphasizes the importance of family, community and culture in countering personal and family stressors^{26,27}. It is the view of the resilience team that resilience takes on many forms. However, central to all of these forms is the underlying concept of "getting through" challenges, obstacles, events and adversities. Hence we describe it as "the process of getting through challenges" in order to be well in life. When gathering the voices of Kahnawakehró:non resilience, we looked at it as a means of identifying shared and distinct aspects of past, current and future resilience as described by people of different generations.

Wakata'karí:te: "I am healthy"

The indigenous perspective of wellness and healing is somewhat different from the Western perspective. For centuries, the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island (North America), including the Haudenosaunee, have understood sickness, mental illness, and disease using more holistic terms. The traditional way of wellness and healing taught that the body, mind, and spirit are interrelated and function together as one. Illness, therefore, comes at a time when there is disharmony between the body, mind, and spirit. Feeling unwell traditionally would prompt a person to consult a Medicine Woman or Man to determine what harm has been done to their spirit and depending on the advice from the medicine person, will then begin to nurture their spirit as a healing process.

Kahnawake takes pride in its strong history of control over its health services and houses the Kateri Memorial Hospital Centre (KMHC) – the only hospital to be both owned and operated by an Aboriginal group in Canada. Health services at KMHC are governed by Kahnawake's Health and Social



Services Commission, Onkwata'karitáhtshera which is responsible for the health of Kanawakehró:non. Its mission states that it "is responsible for planning, maintaining and improving health and social services for the well-being of all Kahnawakehró:non."



The Kanien'kehá:ka phrase for "I am healthy" is *wakata'karí:te*. One individual who was interviewed had this to say about health:

"...keeping this thought in mind, wakata'karí:te shows the idea that something causes me to be healthy, or makes me healthy. In the verb, it doesn't say to cause or to make one be healthy, it is in the pronoun. So, it's just not the thought of being healthy, it's having something in your surroundings, mind or spirit, that makes you healthy physically, and also spiritually. Interesting wáhi!"

Key informant interview, September 7, 2007

Resilience in Kahnawake

This is the first study to explore perspectives of resilience in Kahnawake, however others have written about concepts that relate to resilience in our community (e.g. membership, governance, language and cultural revitalization, impact of loss of land, the Seaway, self-government, Oka crisis, identity)^{28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33}. Within Kahnawake, culture and language provides resources for resilience, not only for the individual but also for the whole community, the Kanien'kehá:ka nation, and the Haudenosaunee³⁴.

For Kahnawakeheró:non, responding to challenges has resulted in tenacity, dignity, resourcefulness, and hope. Many community members currently direct their efforts to strengthening links with a proud heritage and rebuilding communal institutions based on the values and principles contained within the Creation Story and the Kaianere'kó:wa.

THE RESEARCH PROJECT

While considering Kahnawake's past and current socio-political context, this research project aimed to investigate the distinct and shared aspects of resilience across generations. Kahnawa'kehró:non of different generations (e.g. elders and youth) lived in different times during which they were exposed, individually and communally, to different pressures and challenges. The central aims of the current project were to:

1. investigate the variety of processes used by elders, adults, young adults and youth to overcome their generation's challenges;
2. investigate the differences and commonalities between these processes; and
3. identify the key future challenges Kahnawa'kehró:non see on their horizon.

Using a community-based participatory research framework respectful of local traditions and protocols, narratives of resilience were collected through key informant interviews, focus groups discussions, and individual interviews.

Before we could begin the research in Kahnawake, we were required to submit an application to the Onkwata'karitáhtshera Health and Social Services Research Council (OHSSRC) for approval. We submitted an application in June 2007, met with members of the Research Council, answered questions they had about the research project, and received approval to conduct this project in Kahnawake shortly afterwards. As part of the research agreement with OHSSRC, regular progress reports were submitted either in writing, or presented in person by the community researcher at monthly meetings. Part of the research process also included the submission of an ethics review application for approval by the Jewish General Hospital's Institutional Review Board. Approval for this application was received in the summer of 2007.

Building a Collaborative Relationship

This research project followed the guidelines of the of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) for participatory research, and the Onkwata'karitáhtshera Health & Social Services Research Council's

(OHSSRC) Regulation for Research in Kahnawake, and was designed with the wellbeing and benefit of the community of Kahnawake in mind. Community-based participatory research means that research is conducted with the community, not in or about it. Using a community-based participatory research approach, the research team strived to ensure that:

- a respectful and collaborative relationship was formed;
- the project would involve reciprocal capacity building between community and academic partners;
- local protocols were respected and followed;
- community organizations and members of the community were involved in all the stages of the project;
- research results would be returned to the community.



Implementing the collaborative relationship was done in a variety of ways. First a local researcher, Morgan Phillips, was recruited and hired as the community researcher. Then, two key collaborative community partnerships were established: The first with Onkwata'karitáhtshera (OHSSRC) for ethical approval and guidance; the second with a local Community Advisory Group (CAG) which was assembled ad hoc to provide cultural, social, and community guidance. The Community Advisory Group was made up of:

- Amelia McGregor, Elder, Kahnawake Schools Diabetes Prevention Project, Community Advisory Board Member,
- Michael Loft, MSW, PSW, McGill University School of Social Work
- Judi Jacobs, Office Manager, KSDPP

- Kahente Horn-Miller, PhD, Community Researcher, Coordinator, Kahnawake Legislative Coordinating Commission



These four individuals were invited to collaborate throughout the different phases of the project because of their expertise and experience in community-based participatory research, and their dedication to the community. At various consultation stages, their concerns were:

- Respect for different community perspectives;
- Validation of research findings;
- Adherence to local customs and values;
- Assurance that the knowledge translation phase would include a tangible and useful product for the community (i.e. a DVD recording)

Meet the Research Team

The researchers involved in this project are members of the Stories of Resilience research team based at the Jewish General Hospital's Culture and Mental Health Research Unit in Montreal. Two main researchers (Morgan Phillips and Shannon Dow) conducted the focus groups, and organized all aspects of the research in Kahnawake. Morgan Phillips conducted initial interviews (key informant), and individual interviews.



Laurence J. Kirmayer,
Lead Investigator

Laurence J. Kirmayer, MD, FRCPC, is James McGill Professor and Director, Division of Social and Transcultural Psychiatry, Department of Psychiatry, McGill University. He is Editor-in-Chief of Transcultural Psychiatry, a scientific journal published

by Sage (UK) and directs the Culture & Mental Health Research Unit at the Department of Psychiatry, Jewish General Hospital in Montreal where he conducts research on mental health services for immigrants and refugees, psychiatry in primary care, the mental health of indigenous peoples, and the anthropology of psychiatry. He founded and directs the annual Summer Program and Advanced Study Institute in Social and Cultural Psychiatry at McGill. He also founded and co-directs the Network for Aboriginal Mental Health Research funded by the CIHR Institute for Aboriginal Health. His past research includes studies on cultural consultation services in mental health, pathways and barriers to mental health care for immigrants, somatization in primary care, Inuit concepts of mental health and illness, risk and protective factors for suicide among youth in Nunavik. He co-edited the volumes, *Current Concepts of Somatization* (American Psychiatric Press), *Understanding Trauma: Integrating Biological, Clinical, and Cultural Perspectives* (Cambridge University Press), and *Healing Traditions: The Mental Health of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada* (University of British Columbia Press).





Morgan Kahentonni Phillips, Coordinator/Community Researcher, Kahnawake Roots of Resilience Project

Morgan Kahentonni Phillips is a Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) from the community of Kahnawake and a citizen of the H a u d e n o s a u n e e / Six Nations Iroquois

Confederacy. Morgan holds a BA Honours in Anthropology and an MA in Social & Cultural Anthropology from Concordia University in Montreal. She is a PhD student in the Department of Integrated Studies in Education (DISE) at McGill University. Her areas of interests are Indigenous mental health research, resilience, community-based participatory research, decolonizing the academy, and curriculum development. Morgan currently coordinates the Kahnawake portion of the Roots of Resilience Project for the Network for Aboriginal Mental Health Research at the Culture & Mental Health Research Unit of the Institute of Community of Family Psychiatry in Montreal. She is also a volunteer Community Advisory Board Member of the Kahnawake Schools Diabetes Prevention Project (KSDPP) since its inception in August of 1994, and more recently part of its Research Team. Morgan has a solid background in qualitative research and her culture, and supports community-based participatory research and collaborative partnerships. She also assists Dr. Ann Macaulay at Participatory Research at McGill (PRAM) on the Indigenous Health Curriculum Committee at the McGill Faculty of Family of Medicine in developing Indigenous health curricula for medical students.



Stéphane Dandeneau, Scientific Coordinator

Stéphane Dandeneau, is currently assistant professor of psychology at the Université du Québec à Montréal. After completing his PhD in social psychology at McGill University, Stéphane worked on the Roots of Resilience Project at the Culture and Mental

Health Research Unit, Jewish General Hospital during his postdoc. Stéphane has broad interests in social psychology and social-cultural psychology and the underlying social cognitive processes of social resilience. His first line of research investigates the links between self-esteem, social stress, and attentional processes involved in perpetuating psychological insecurities. His research examines ways of training people with low self-esteem "high self-esteem-like skills" such as inhibiting social rejection, which is shown to buffer against social and performance threats (www.selfesteemgames.mcgill.ca, and www.mindhabs.com). His research also investigates sources of resilience and definitions of resilience from an Aboriginal perspective using a community-based approach with the Roots of Resilience Project (www.mcgill.ca/resilience). The current hegemony of individualistic conceptualisations of resilience in today's literature overshadows other, more eco-centric, conceptualisations. Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, the project aims to develop a more culturally appropriate model of resilience as well as showcase the many different facets of Aboriginal people's strengths.



Shannon Dow, MA, was the Research Coordinator of the ICIHRP Roots of Resilience Study. Shannon is an Anthropologist with research interests in medical anthropology, Aboriginal health research, social determinants of health, participatory research, and international development. Shannon obtained a BA (Joint Honours) in Anthropology and International Development Studies from McGill University, and an MA in Social and Cultural Anthropology from Concordia University. Her research project for her master's degree was a participatory research study that explored perceptions of Type 2 diabetes in Kahnawake. In her thesis, *Beyond Sweet Blood: Perceptions of Type 2 Diabetes in Kahnawake*, she suggests that insight into perceptions of Type 2 diabetes indicates that the health problem of the disease is not limited to "sweet blood" per se, but must be considered within broader social and political relations, and the position of Kahnawake in Canada presently and historically. Shannon has also worked for non-governmental organizations in Canada and internationally on initiatives in support of education and human rights.

The Research Participants

The research aimed to achieve a broad understanding of resilience among Kahnawakeró:non, therefore our goal was to include participants of all ages, including youth, adults and elders. The Community Advisory Group assisted in providing potential names of community members for individual interviews as well as focus groups participants. Participants of all ages were also recruited using a snowball sampling, and efforts were made to recruit participants from a variety of occupations (e.g.: students, parents, public service staff, elders, volunteers, entrepreneurs, retirees, etc.). An effort was made to keep an equal number of female and male participants.

- Youth (16-21)
- Young adults (22-39)
- Adults (40-64)
- Elders (65 and older)

Youth – those under 20 years. This included one focus group.

Young Adults – those between 21 and 34 years. This included one focus group and four individual interviews.

Adults – those between 35 and 64 years. This included two focus groups, and three individual interviews.

Elders – those who were 65 years and older. This included two focus groups and three individual interviews.

Key informant interviews:

1 young adult (man), 2 adults (1 man, 1 woman), 2 Elders (1 man, 1 woman).

Focus group discussions:

- Youth: 7 (2 women, 5 men)
- Adults: 10 (7 women, 2 men)
- Elders: 13 (all women)

Individual interviews:

	Youth (16-21)	Young adults (22-32)	Adults (33-55)	Elders (56 and older)	Total
Women	4	2	2	2	10
Men	2	3	3	2	10
Total	6	5	5	4	20



THE RESEARCH PROCESS

To explore Kahnawake's perspectives on resilience, this study proposed to collect stories through key informant interviews, focus groups, and individual narrative interviews. The entire project was divided into the following seven phases:

Phase 1: Community consultation and ethics approval

Phase 2: Key informant interviews

Phase 3: Focus group discussions

Phase 4: Preliminary data analysis

Phase 5: Individual narrative interviews

Phase 6: Main data analysis

Phase 7: Knowledge sharing

Phase 1 – Community consultation and ethics approval

Phase 1 of the project took place during the early summer of 2007. Before we could begin the research in Kahnawake, we submitted our project for approval by the Onkwata'karitáhtshera Health and Social Services Research Council (OHSSRC), the governing body responsible for research involving health and social services. We submitted an application in June 2007, met with members of the Research Council, answered questions they had about the research project, and received approval to conduct this project in Kahnawake shortly afterwards. A research contract outlining the project's goals, methods, and each party's responsibilities was negotiated and signed with OHSSRC. In addition to local ethics approval, the project was submitted to and approved by the Sir Mortimer B. Davis Jewish General Hospital Ethics Committee. As part of the research agreement with OHSSRC and the Hospital Ethics Committee, regular progress reports were submitted either in writing, or presented in person by the community researcher at monthly meetings.

In parallel to the ethics approval process, the Community Advisory Group was established. Their first task was to provide feedback on the clarity of questions to be asked in the community, the terms used, and the general flow of the proposed interviews.

Phase 2 – Key informant interviews

Following the community consultation and ethics approval phase, the Community Advisory Group provided names of people from different age groups whom they felt were "resilient" individuals, and who had overcome adversity in their lives. The community researcher then conducted five initial interviews to get a sense of how resilience is understood and talked about, from key people in the community. Each person was given a \$25 honorarium. Interview questions were used as a guide and divided into the following sections:

1. Kahnawake's past, current and future challenges; how challenges were or are overcome
2. What helps people do well despite challenges
3. Views of wellness or doing well
4. Language, words, and expressions related to resilience
5. Examples of resilient individuals, communities or nations
6. Resilience-related traditional stories

Once the interviews were transcribed, we used this important information to adjust and improve the questions for the focus groups such as thoroughly defining the term resilience to age groups not accustomed to using the term in everyday conversation. At this early stage of the project, the strong sense of pride that exists in the community concerning its history was evident, as well as ongoing language and cultural revitalization efforts being undertaken by the community as a whole. When asked: "What are the signs of health, wellness and resilience for the people of Kahnawake?" one key person responded:

"So one of the things that I try to begin to look at now is how can we use aspects of the Condolence Ceremony to help people in restoring their mind as a result of grief and loss...in spite of all the things that have happened, because of the things that have happened to us, then that kind of just gives us the will and the strength to say well in spite of it all we're going to preserve and we're going to always be...as long as those stories [Creation Story for example] keep getting told, then those stories help us to make sense out of all the conflict and problems that have



happened to where we are and always giving us the hope that as long as the sun shines, the grass grows, and the water flows, we're going to be here."

Key informant interview, June 27, 2007

Phase 3 – Focus groups

Led by the community researcher and project coordinator, a total of six focus groups from four different age groups were held in Kahnawake during the following fall and winter (youth, young adults, adults, and elders) – Table 1. Group discussions were held either in public service buildings within Kahnawake, or at the community researcher's home. The main focus of the focus group discussions was to gather communal or community-oriented perspectives of resilience and identify ways in which the community as a whole "gets or has gotten through community challenges."

As food plays an important part in Haudenosaunee culture and is normally offered during gatherings, a meal was shared with participants. The focus group questions were designed to allow discussion to happen naturally around the following topics (see Appendix 5):

1. Community challenges and how they are, or were, overcome
2. What helps people do well despite challenges
3. Views of wellness or doing well
4. Language, words, and expressions related to resilience
5. Examples of resilient individuals, communities or nations
6. Resilience-related traditional stories

Lasting between one to two hours, focus groups allowed for lively discussion and reflection between participants, especially around the sharing of traditional stories and elders' stories of "old" Kahnawake, before the destruction of the riverfront. Along with a meal, each participant received a \$25 honorarium.

Phase 4 – Preliminary data analysis

Collaboratively, the team of researchers then analyzed the focus group transcriptions, and a thematic analysis was developed. Main themes

arising from the focus groups were used to adapt individual narrative questions that now reflected Kahnawake's context on resilience. Results were then presented to the Community Advisory Group for input and suggestions. Based on the results from key informant interviews and focus groups, lists of common responses to three sections of the interview were generated. The three lists consisted of (see Appendix 2 for complete lists):

- Community challenges,
- Language, words, and expressions, and
- Traditional stories of resilience

These lists were then used during the Individual Narrative Interviews as additional probes in order to gauge whether the key informant and focus group responses were idiosyncratic or whether they represented more communal experiences.

Phase 5 – Individual narrative interviews

From February, 2008 to October 2009, Morgan Phillips, the community researcher conducted 20 individual narrative interviews with community members from different age groups ranging from 16-79 years of age. Community members were asked to provide their perspectives on:

1. Personal stories of resilience;
2. How personal life challenges were overcome;
3. Language, words and expressions related to resilience;
4. Traditional stories of resilience;
5. Ways that resilience knowledge is shared; and
6. Prediction of future personal and community challenges, and most importantly how participants thought resilience could be strengthened in Kahnawake.

The individual interviews resembled the focus group interviews in that they generally addressed ways in which people "get or have gotten over their challenges". A few key differences are worth mentioning. First, the individual narrative focused on people's personal stories of resilience, rather than on more community-oriented resilience. Second, for each personal challenge, interviewees were asked more specifically what had helped them "get through



it". Following this open-ended question, people where then further probed about certain sources of potential resilience such as family, personal actions or thoughts, and cultural factors.

Once the interviews were transcribed, each participant was given a copy of the transcript and asked to validate their transcript and/or suggest changes in order to ensure that their narrative was properly represented. A few minor changes were suggested and incorporated into the main data analysis. Most participants did not make any changes to their transcripts.

Phase 6 – Main data analysis

At this stage of the project, the Community Advisory Board was convened to discuss our analysis strategy. The research team wanted to ensure that the community's context was properly understood and that is was reflected in the analysis. In addition, we felt it important to make the analysis relevant and beneficial for the community and not merely an intellectual or theoretical pursuit. The themes stemming from the focus group discussions suggested differences in perceptions and enactment of resilience across generational groups. Therefore, as a group, we came to a consensus that exploring the shared and distinct ways in which each generational group communicated resilience was both a community- and theoretically-relevant research goal. The main thrust of the project was then focused on making sense of how different generations shared, viewed, lived and communicate resilience.

At this point, we turned to the Community Advisory Group to advise us how to define "generational groups". That is, it was difficult to separate generational groups based on age ranges. Therefore, based on advice from the Community Advisory Group, we agreed it was best to divide the age groups according to different life stages. The four important life stages represented by our interviewees were:

1. Youth (represented by participants who were 16 to 21)
2. Young adults (represented by participants who were 22 to 39)
3. Adults (represented by participants who were 40 to 64)

4. Elders (represented by participants who were 65 and older)

Once the age groups had been established, each member of the research team individually analyzed all the interviews and highlighted the shared and distinct aspects of resilience across each generational group. We then regrouped to compare and consolidate our coding schemes and interpretation of the interviews to eventually produce a unified analysis.

Coding Scheme

Table of Analysis

Phase 7 – Knowledge sharing

The final phase of the project involved knowledge-sharing and knowledge-exchange activities. Based on earlier advice from the Community Advisory Board during the early stages of the project, it had been made clear that this phase of the project should include the production of a tangible product that could be left with the community after the project was complete. The goal of the knowledge-sharing phase is to implement an easily accessible and captivating way of sharing the results with the community. Apart from regularly reporting to Onkwata'karitáhtshera's Health & Social Services Resource Council, the following activities would become part of the knowledge-sharing process:

1. Create a DVD/vignette
2. Develop a community report
3. Plan a Resilience Day
4. Dissemination throughout the local media (print, radio, local cable TV)
5. Curriculum/teaching material for students in local schools

Other possible outcomes of the research:

1. Conference presentations
2. Peer reviewed journal publications
3. Other publications
4. Curriculum/teaching material for non-Indigenous audiences.



RESEARCH FINDINGS

Main Themes

The Roots of Resilience: Stories of Resilience, Healing and Transformation project has produced a wealth of knowledge based on personal and community stories that describe its current picture, as well as a history of events that have shaped it. Those who participated in this project were very generous with their time and knowledge. We felt that in combining multiple narratives, a collective narrative was expressed, one involving the following four themes:

1. Distinct aspects of resilience across generations
2. Shared aspects of resilience across generations
3. Shift toward individualism, materialism, capitalism, and loss of "Being Mohawk"
4. Reconnecting to a sense of one-mindedness or *onkwe'nikón:ra* – a term meaning the process of consensus building, or an agreement of "one collective mind".

Theme 1 - Distinct aspects of resilience across generations

Generations of Kahnawakehró:non have lived through and experienced different eras. Each one came with specific, or distinct challenges for Kahnawakehró:non requiring distinct ways of getting through them. Each generation showed distinct ways of communicating and expressing their resilience. For instance, elders often spoke of resilience in terms of survival and overcoming physical hardship.

Elder focus group:

A

"Well my grandmother used to make her own bread.

G

This time of the year we had to stack up on flour.

E

Lard.

H

Sugar.

G

Whatever. Like a hundred pound bag of molasses.

C

It was a challenge just to survive.

MP

Survive eh.

C

Yeah, to survive, but there's always a way."

Adults and elders often communicated their resilience through the re-telling of significant events that shaped them and the community. They shared stories of life during the old days, the ice storm of 1998, and life on the river before the St. Lawrence Seaway. They often spoke of being resilient against colonization and significant external challenges through which they have lived, such as residential schools, the Oka Crisis of 1990, and the community taking control of its own education and health and social services beginning in the late 1960s. They also expressed the importance of keeping these stories alive because they are now part of Kahnawake's history and cultural knowledge.

Certain events that seemed to have had a great impact:

Adult focus group:

MP

So what do you think has made us resilient?

A

The government has made us resilient...Yeah, they tried hard but all it did was make us stronger...Well they tried to assimilate us and they tried, like with residential schools and then, it just backfired on them because it only made us more resilient and more, it made our skin tougher."

Individuals from both the adult and elder generational groups identified personal sources of resilience, such as mindsets and personality characteristics as ways of overcoming adversity. Finding inner strength and courage is one way people get through challenges, whereas others rely more heavily on family support, local and outside services, and being at the Longhouse, or at school.



Elder:

A

Well this is just it, you just will yourself, you're not going to let anything bring you down, you're just going to keep on going, the best way you know how.

MP

OK. And then how do you get through that challenge?

A

That day, but like he [my great-grandfather] always said, always with an open mind."

Youth:

"Well it just showed me how [being a parent], if I need anything, my family can help me out. I've never really been through anything hard, that I never really needed my family to help me out with anything really till this [being a young parent]. So now I know that they are there for me."

Adult focus group:

"See that word she said, extended family. We all have our personal families where we're really close knit, but outside of that there's the extended family where we have friends, we have people like aunts or uncles or you know or brothers or sisters or mothers or fathers that are able to do things that we can't handle. So that's the extended family, and that's where that circle comes in of how the community helps Kahnawake as a whole, it's the extended family part. The part that that extended family plays in the role of that. The younger generation they have teachers, they have like role models of people that they look up to, that's the whole part in that extended family, just like she said."

Some have expressed that the matriarchal nature of Haudenosaunee culture contributes to Kahnawake's resilience. Besides gaining strength from family and extended family, younger generations gained strength from their friends at school and from many available community resources such as the Kahnawake Youth Center and community youth programs. They also mentioned seeking and obtaining support from people and resources outside of Kahnawake such as friends and teachers.

Many younger people see the value of education and express their resilience through multi-media, such as film and graphic arts.

Young adult individual interview:

"Yeah. And I always wonder, you know kind of people, I remember an English teacher that I had [says name] back at Survival School, she says, "When you think, when you're reading a story, do you see it? Like a movie?" And I said, "Well it's almost like I would know where to put the camera. In my head. That's all I'm thinking about is where I would put the camera, what this would look like, how it would move, blah, blah, blah." Well she goes, not a lot of people think like that."

Theme 2 – Shared aspects of resilience across generations

While each individual and even each generation has their own way of getting through challenges, there are several prominent sources of strengths that all generations share. They are:

1. being Onkwehón:we, meaning "the original people";
2. having a strong identity and connection to the land;
3. revitalizing and preserving language and culture; and
4. having the need and willingness to build stronger relationships and connections with each other.

People spoke with one mind, but from multiple voices. The community has expressed that "being Mohawk", being Kanien'kehá:ka, being Onkwehón:we, means that within each person is a wealth of sub-conscious cultural, spiritual, and communal strength. Having a proud Kanien'kehá:ka identity thus means: honouring neighbours, family and extended family; recognizing and honouring the gifts that the Creator sent us to this earth with; valuing the wealth of resources in Kahnawake, such as education; coming together and togetherness in times of hardship; and ensuring that Kahnawakehró:non know their own history and culture so that it can be passed on to future generations.

Elder:

"Because resilience comes out of people having really,



you've got to be grounded in who you are as a human being to be resilient. You have to be grounded in who, and it doesn't mean that you don't fall apart a little bit. But it means that you can pull yourself together and if people around you, if you do fall apart..."

Elder:

"I think a well person is someone who knows him or herself personally, who is not easily influenced by outside society, who feels what is important is not power, is not money, is not belongings, but a feeling within themselves, this is who they are. This is who I am, I'm a person that the Creator made and I have gifts."

Young Adult Individual Interview:

"Education, sticking together, pride. Once you have pride in who you are and what you do, and who your people are, what you've accomplished, you're gonna want to maintain that integrity, you're gonna want to maintain that, you're gonna want to say that, well, you know, I have such a proud tradition, I want to take that forward."

Being Kanien'kehá:ka also means "sticking together" which for many was a way of standing united and strong. In many instances, people expressed the possibility of becoming a stronger nation of people if the community was able to unite more often:

Elder:

"Like I say too, many people, sometimes when we're talking, [says name] and I, how come it's only when we're in trouble we become one? How come? Why can't we be one all the time?"

Adult Focus Group:

"Like how we got through it is the way we get through everything. Maybe we don't always agree on how we're supposed to do it, but somehow or other, we have that ability to net ourselves together, to be able to stand strong and be able to conquer things. We have our people that have their specialties. We have our people that can speak the language, we have our people that are academics who are able to negotiate for us. We have our people that do the ceremonies and everything. As a collective we are a very strong people. Not one individual could have done all that. But as a collective we are very strong people."

Kahnawakehró:non have said that learning, teaching and speaking their mother tongue is crucial to being a Haudenosaunee citizen. Even though the community has had its share of social, political and cultural obstacles, all generations share a deep appreciation for the value, importance, and survival of the Kanien'kehéhá:ka people. While the elders have faith that the younger generations will use and teach the language, the younger generations understand the collective responsibility and express the desire to speak it more often, not only during school hours. Many adults speak fluently within their homes and families. Regardless of how well one is versed in their mother tongue, our spirits know that our culture is in our language and that it must be practiced and kept alive.

Adult Focus Group:

"That's the part of resilience that Kahnawake still has, that the Mohawk nation still has, is that resilience, it's the resilience of the language."

Adult:

"Personally my biggest belief is in language. That's what can really save us. Once you acquire, once you have been given a strong solid foundation in Kanien'keha, everything else falls into place automatically. I don't know anybody I have never met one single person in my life who hasn't gone out of their way to learn or to remember their language and has not been transformed by it."

Theme 3 – Shift toward individualism, materialism, capitalism, and loss of "being Mohawk"

Many participants believe that the community's experience and effects of changing social values are related to external factors such as consumer capitalism and the pursuit of material gain, which threaten the very identity of the Kanien'kehá:ka people. Examples given include:

- living a fast-paced life,
- the gaming industry that now exists in the community,
- the decline of community thinking,
- the loss of care for neighbours,
- internalized oppression,



- negativity,
- the lack of support for one another, and
- the decline of maintaining close extended family ties – an important component of community life that was enjoyed and shared when the population was much smaller.

Many spoke of issues surrounding the tobacco industry and how it is perceived to play a role in changing values. While the tobacco industry has brought wealth to the community and has been a major source of employment since the early 1980s, some feel others have profited from the collective right of the people for individual profit. The youth are concerned about the pollution caused by the industry in the community and the negative effects of tobacco abuse, its spiritual misuse, as well as the negative image that the media has created and continues to portray of the overall industry across Haudenosaunee territory.

A common challenge identified by all generations is the preservation and maintenance of identity in the wake of increased individualism and materialism. Just as the riverbank has been eroded and separated from the heart of the community, people indicated that individualism and materialism are threatening their way of being Kanien'kehá:ka.

Adult Focus Group:

"But still, individualism overrides nationhood in the way things are right now. We're all in different directions, but we're all from the same place, we're all heading in different directions. So individualism is overtaking nationhood."

Elder:

"So we're moving in a different direction. And I think part of the challenge is going to be around social status and this whole idea about how people feel about where different people are. Because I mean people are into money now, and that whole idea of is money filling that hole in your body? Or do you need to get something else to fill the hole in your body? I think that's pretty clear. I mean the gas itself is never going to go down so I don't know how people are going to keep Hummer's going."

Young adult:

"And we have to sort of take the focus off of making money for a little. It's great, there's not much unemployment in the community, but the sad part of doing that is that it becomes the focus, you know, making money becomes the focus instead of being a means to achieve something else."

This shift toward individualism and materialism is seen as one of the main causes of a decline in caring for neighbours, the community as a whole, and maintaining close family ties.

Elder Focus Group:

"You know, we went through so much and we grew up, each generation got a little more, we got a little more information, we got a little more money coming in because the men were out working, coming home. Then we became a little more independent. When we had nothing and this sort of thing came in, yes we appreciated it."

Elder:

"Cuz a long time ago everybody in Kahnawake was your grandmother. Everybody was your grandfather. You know we have lost that a bit, now. You know today I think people ask me, why is it different? Why? You know like I said another challenge and like you're talking about challenges that were facing. Today we don't have our grandmother or grandfather. Mother and father work. Who's minding the kids?"

Lastly, many feel misunderstood (and ignored) by mainstream society and feel that the history of Canada and the United States has not been properly taught in the primary and secondary school systems.

Theme 4: Reconnecting to our one-mindedness

Throughout most of the stories we gathered, the underlying message was a concern for the collective, for future generations, and in particular, about language and culture retention. Through these stories it seems as though Kahnawake speaks with one-mindedness, sometimes without realizing it. When you think about it, this one-mindedness is inherent in our traditional teachings: that is, consensus building. Achieving one-mindedness thinking in Haudenosaunee culture originates within the decision-making process



amongst the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Striving for consensus is achieved through deliberation, or until all parties agree upon a solution to an issue.

Young Adult Individual Interview:

"I think deep down inside we all have the same goals, we all have the same objectives..."

Relatively quick changes in the last 50-100 years appear to have impacted the communication between generations, however, the core values and beliefs are still intact. Sources of resilience that involve remembering the responsibility for the collective and the care for future generations can help to further the community's ability to move forward. Despite differences, Kahnawake has shown an ability to put differences aside in order to care for the collective. One adult commented, "[You] are free to live the life that you want to lead, as long as it doesn't conflict with the will of the collective".

All generations essentially want the same thing: to work towards the wellbeing of the community while upholding cultural and language teachings. Many feel that having a well-founded and healthy Mohawk identity is what fundamentally helps them through personal, family and community challenges, and more importantly, is what promotes our cohesiveness. While different words, expressions and examples are used to express resilience through stories and teachings, the community is saying that being Kanien'kehá:ka, or Mohawk, is their main source of resilience. We strongly believed that helping people recognize this shared subconscious one-mindedness can help to bridge different generations and maintain togetherness; not only during times of hardship, but in everyday life.

Adult Individual Interview:

"We're resilient because we're Mohawk."

Elder Individual Interview:

"Some day when you stand there, you'll fight for me. I won't be here no more. You'll still fight for what I was fighting for."



EXPRESSIONS OF RESILIENCE

In addition to gathering peoples' communal and personal stories of resilience, we also wanted to gather words and expressions used to describe or refer to the concept of resilience. The word "resilient" is infrequently used in day-to-day life, however we often refer to people, families, personality traits, or cultural values as "being resilient", however not in those terms. In other words, we aimed to gather usual and commonly understood words and expressions related to resilience. In gathering this list of words that are known and commonly used, we hope to highlight how present "resilience" is in our everyday life.

List generated during Phase 4, based on focus groups (words, expressions, sayings related to resilience) in Onkwehonwe'héha or English – in alphabetical order:

Onkwehonwe'néha:

Akwé Skatne/skatneshón'a

Iakoahtahní:ron

Iakotáskat

Iakowatshe

Ioianerátie thi iakónkwe

Iokata'karite

Kahnikonri:io

Kahshatsénshera

Kanonshésne

Kwah í:ken tsi ioianerátie tsi ronhétie

Orihwaká:ion

Ronkwe'tí:io

Sakwatshér

Sata'karí:te

Satshén:ni

Skén:nen

Skwatá:ko

Tentesat'tá:ko

English:

Able to meet challenges

Connection to home/homeland

Determined

Generosity

Good family person

Happy

Help other people

Kahnawake

Kindness

Leadership

Live free or die

Our language

Our minds our strong

Perseverance

Pride/proud

Role model

Sense of home

Share

Strong

Strong-willed

Survivor

Tenacious

Thrive

Togetherness

Tough

Turtles

We're still here

Willful

Winner



CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Countering Modern Challenges

Community challenges range from health, identity, and relationships to substance abuse and changing social values. There is a genuine concern about the rise of individualism and materialism in Kahnawake that is causing a lowered sense of cohesion amongst extended family and neighbours. Sources of present day individualism and materialism are said to stem from more wealth coming into the community – from the tobacco industry for example, and the growth in population. Nearly a hundred years ago, the community's population was only approximately 1,000 people and today the population has risen to over 8,000 people. Because of the growth in population it is not as easy to know everyone and some admit to feeling less responsibility for caring for others. With individualism comes a different set of values, mainly, valuing personal freedom above collective wellbeing.

Each of the age groups with whom we discussed resilience offered their own unique ways of countering modern challenges. Preserving language and cultural values, and being united for the sake of the collective and future generations is an ideology that elders feel can strengthen the community in the face of future challenges. Building and maintaining relationships by honoring and respecting one another, and building confidence and self-esteem in younger generations are strategies for strengthening the community, which stood out amongst the adults. Young adults see the need to share knowledge about resilience not only within the community but also with the outside world. They felt that this strategy could help to build stronger relationships with others, as well as eradicate racism. Many of the young people we spoke with have chosen careers in the multi-media industry, which allows them to express their creativity.

Knowledge Exchange

As previously stated, one of the goals of community-based participatory research is to present communities with results in a manner which is meaningful, accessible and useful. To address this, feedback from the Community Advisory Group (CAG) was incorporated into the knowledge exchange phase of the project. The CAG insisted that this project be a positive portrayal of the community. Their participation has been invaluable to the project and meant that their ideas and suggestions became an important guiding principle.

As a contribution to the community, the team was required to submit a final report to partners involved in the project. It was also agreed that a community forum(s) would be organized that would give opportunity for sharing and feedback on the project and the research team's findings. Results will be shared within Kahnawake through local media outlets, publications in academic journals, and conference presentations. It was also suggested that a learning module about the research findings that could be used in the community schools be created. A 16-minute DVD/vignette entitled "Resilience Voices of Kahnawake" was created by the team as an additional resource to communicate findings to the community, on local cable television networks, and academic outlets.



STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE

Youth

Education encourage higher education
 Empowerment empower women through supporting/encouraging each other, including youth

Family strengthen, instill values

Language and culture revitalize/preserve; identity, history, trilingual

Togetherness/Unity communication, be open emotionally, avoid jealousy, practice positive affirmation, improve relations with neighboring communities, share/pass on personal learned/life experiences

Youth create youth programs, school workshops that build self esteem and instil traditional values

Young adults

Collective/Community be proud of community, have good support systems, be generous, maintain good community resources, contribute to community – it will become contagious!

Individuality start with yourself/home, don't wait for someone else

Future be prepared for a population that might be out of work (if tobacco industry ends)

Knowledge see the value in learning about "the outside" and bringing that knowledge back to the community

Language and culture preserve, take pride in history and community, walk the talk

Materialism take the focus off of money for a while

Togetherness

communicate; express empathy, compassion, and emotions; share stories of struggles and perseverance (it inspires people) – use attractive medium, be open minded, be more tolerant of each other, use willpower, stick together, bring ideals/morals from the past whether Longhouse or Christian

Adults

Empowerment Women empowering women, women healing and supporting each other i.e. mentoring someone, the men will follow suit

Family Honour and respect your children

Future Think about 7 generations from now

Healing Hold healing workshops

Land Don't give up any more land

Language and culture Preserve/revitalize Haudenosaunee Confederacy (political system), renew Condolence Ceremony: our reconnection to language connects us to our history and our past

Programs Have visioning workshops

Togetherness/unity Communicate in a respectful way, support one another, bring out community issues in public forms (radio/TV/newspaper), share personal/collective experience connecting present with past, have a positive attitude, instil national pride, remind everyone of what elders/ancestors have left us

Youth

Recognize that hope is in the youth: mentor the young



Elders

Collective/community Volunteer, think about the collective, strength is in people, support the local economy, follow/support our own laws

Education Become educated! The community will rely on educated people, support local education

Family Stick together, plan family gardens, take care of family, raise youth properly with guidance

Future Be prepared for future (7 generations)

Individuality Love starts with loving yourself, marry for love

Language and culture Preserve and revitalize, relearn traditional ways, learn your history, know and be proud of your identity, walk the talk, learn your language

Togetherness/unity Communication, promote togetherness (i.e. 50 chiefs holding hands/circle wampum, avoid waste (food and clothing), be more affectionate

Youth Uplift the youth – they are the future leaders, we depend on the youth, raise children properly, youth need to be guided.



Appendices

APPENDIX 1 – Community Challenges

List generated during Phase 4, based on focus groups (in alphabetical order):

Alcohol abuse
Appropriation of land for St. Lawrence Seaway
Being taught not to show emotion
Breakdown of Longhouses
Colonization
Complacency
Decline in caring for neighbours
Domestic violence
Education
Evictions of 1973
External racism
Factionalism
French language
Gaming
Government policies
Health concerns
Imposition of Indian Act
Individualism
Internal racism
Introduction of unhealthy foods
Loss of culture
Loss of identity
Loss of land
Loss of language (lack of use by certain age groups)
Not enough health professionals
Nuns teaching in community
Oka Crisis of 1990
Policing
Project Archipel
Quebec bridge disaster of 1907
Religion
Residential schools
Sexual abuse
Survival (weather, economy, basic family needs)
Traditional vs. non-traditional

APPENDIX 2 – Traditional Stories of Resilience

List generated during Phase 4, based on focus groups: Traditional Stories of Resilience (in alphabetical order):

Creation Story

- Atotárho's life story (Left Handed Twin)

Half a Blanket

How the birds got their feathers

Kaianere'kó:wa (The Great Law of Peace Story)

- Formation of the Confederacy
- The story of Aionwátha (The Peacemaker)

Kateri Tekakwitha (her life story)

Les Patriotes (the invasion)

Oka Crisis of 1990

Repossession of Ganienkeh Mohawk Territory (the story)

Skakoteiaió:iaks (The Little People)

Tharonhiawá:kon (the story of The Holder of the Sky)

The Coming/Creation of the Medicines

The Condolence Ceremony

The False Faces

The lady (and others) who refused to leave their homes when the Seaway was being developed

APPENDIX 3 – Interview questions (Protocols)

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Local Concepts of Resilience

Date: _____
Location: _____
Start time: _____
End time: _____
Facilitator(s): _____

Reminders for conducting this interview:

- Introduce yourself before you begin the interview.
- Make sure the participant is comfortable with the interview, the location of the interview, etc.
- Go through the consent form with the participant and have them sign it. If the participant is not comfortable with signing the consent form, you may read the consent form to them and have them give their verbal consent on tape.
- Please follow the interview protocol as closely as possible.
- Allow discussions to happen naturally, and to continue if you think the topics discussed are relevant to the research.
- If you feel the discussion is going off topic, refer back to the interview protocol to move on to the next question.

Please introduce this interview with the following preface:

The purpose of this interview is to understand the roots of resilience. When I use the word "resilience" I mean the ability of a person or group of people who have faced significant life challenges, to adapt to or get through these challenges, and be well in their life. During this interview, I will be asking you questions about your views of resilience, your views of wellness or doing well, words and sayings related resilience, examples of resilience, and traditional stories of resilience.

This discussion will be recorded, and later we will transcribe the recording. We will then analyse the information from this interview and the other interviews we will be conducting to identify how people think about resilience, and identify ways to support resilience and healing in your and other communities.

A. YOUR VIEWS OF RESILIENCE

Preface: We're interested in hearing *your* stories and views of resilience. These first questions are about the challenges your community has faced.

- 1) What are some of the **challenges** this community has faced? (Past/present/ongoing)
 - a) How did your community get through these challenges?
 - b) What kind of **changes** did your community go through because of these challenges? (Positive or negative changes)
- 2) What are the things that help people in your community do well despite challenges?

Please follow up with these questions if the participant does not talk about them:

- a) How does **family** help people in your community get through challenges?
- b) How does your **community** help people in your community get through challenges?
- c) How does the **larger society** help people in your community get through challenges?

B. YOUR VIEWS OF WELLNESS OR DOING WELL

Preface: These next questions ask about how you can tell that people and communities are doing well.

3) How can you tell that **someone** is **doing well** in this community, despite challenges?

4) How can you tell the whole **community** is **doing well**, despite challenges?

Please follow up the above question with the following question (if necessary):

a) What are the signs of health and wellness in your community?

C. LANGUAGE, WORDS, AND EXPRESSIONS RELATED TO RESILIENCE.

Preface: The next questions are related to the words and expressions used to refer to resilience, or the ability of a person or group of people who have faced life challenges, to adapt to or get through these challenges. These could be in either [use relevant language], English or any other language you know.

5) What words do you use to describe a person who is resilient?

6) What words do you use to describe a whole community that is resilient?

Please follow up the above question with the following questions:

a) Do you know of [use relevant language] words that describe a person / a whole community who is resilient?

b) How would you translate their meanings into English?

7) Are these words commonly used in the community?

8) How can you tell that someone is resilient, and [use words described above]?

9) How can you tell that a whole community is resilient, and [use words described above]?

D. EXAMPLES OF RESILIENCE

Preface: These next questions ask about examples of individuals and communities that are resilient. You do not need to name names.

10) Can you give an example of a **person** who you think is resilient? They can be from inside or outside your community.

a) How do you know they are resilient?

b) What do you think has made them resilient?

11) Can you give examples of **families** that are resilient? They can be from inside or outside your community.

a) How do you know they are resilient?

b) What do you think has made them resilient?

12) Can you give examples of **communities** or **nations** that are resilient? They can be from anywhere.

a) How do you know they are resilient?

b) What do you think has made them resilient?

13) Do you think your community is resilient?

a) How do you know your community is resilient?

b) What do you think has made your community resilient?

E. TRADITIONAL STORIES OF RESILIENCE.

Preface: We would like to know about stories that are told in the community that include examples of resilience.

14) Can you tell me about any traditional stories that include examples of resilience?

If the connection of the story to resilience is unclear, please ask:

a) What part of this story is an example of resilience?

Final comment: Those are all the questions we have for you. Thank you very much for taking the time to participate in this interview.

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL
Local Concepts of Resilience

Date: _____

Location: _____

Focus group type (elders, parents, youth): _____

Start time: _____

End time: _____

Facilitator(s): _____

Number of participants: _____

Reminders for conducting this focus group session:

- Introduce yourself before you begin the focus group.
- Make sure the participants are comfortable with the focus group, the location of the focus group, etc.
- Go through the consent form with the participants and have them sign it. If and participants are not comfortable with signing the consent form, you may read the consent form to them and have them give their verbal consent on tape.
- Please follow the focus group protocol as closely as possible.
- Allow discussions to happen naturally, and to continue if you think the topics discussed are relevant to the research.
- If you feel the discussion is going off topic, refer back to the focus group protocol to move on to the next question.

Please introduce this focus group session with the following preface:

The purpose of this focus group is to understand the roots of resilience. When I use the word “resilience” I mean the ability of a person or group of people who have faced significant life challenges, to adapt to or get through these challenges, and be well in their life. During this focus group, I will be asking you questions about your views of resilience, your views of wellness or doing well, words and sayings related resilience, examples of resilience, and traditional stories of resilience.

This discussion will be recorded, and later we will transcribe the recording. We will then analyse the information from this focus group and the other interviews we will be conducting to identify how people think about resilience, and identify ways to support resilience and healing in your and other communities.

A. YOUR VIEWS OF RESILIENCE

Preface: We’re interested in hearing your stories and views of resilience. These first questions are about your personal experiences either as individuals or as a community.

- 1) What are some of the challenges this community has faced? (Past/present/ongoing)
 - a. How did your community get through these challenges?
 - b. What kind of changes did your community go through because of these challenges? (Positive or negative changes)
- 2) What are the things that help people in your community do well despite challenges?

Please follow up with these questions if the participant does not talk about them:

- a. How does family help people in your community get through challenges?
- b. How does your community help people in your community get through challenges?
- c. How does the larger society help people in your community get through challenges?

B. YOUR VIEWS OF WELLNESS OR DOING WELL

Preface: These next questions ask about how you can tell that people and communities are doing well.

- 3) How can you tell that someone is doing well in this community, despite challenges?
- 4) How can you tell the whole community is doing well, despite challenges?

Please follow up the above question with the following question (if necessary):

- a. What are the signs of health and wellness in your community?

C. LANGUAGE, WORDS, AND EXPRESSIONS RELATED TO RESILIENCE

Preface: The next questions are related to the words and expressions used to refer to resilience, or the ability of a person or group of people who have faced life challenges, to adapt to or get through these challenges. These could be in either [use relevant language], English or any other language you know.

- 5) What words do you use to describe a person who is resilient?
- 6) What words do you use to describe a whole community that is resilient?

Please follow up the above question with the following questions:

- a. Do you know of [use relevant language] words that describe a person / a whole community who is resilient?
- b. How would you translate their meanings into English?
- 7) Are these words commonly used in the community?
- 8) How can you tell that someone is resilient, and [use words described above]?
- 9) How can you tell that a whole community is resilient, and [use words described above]?

D. EXAMPLES OF RESILIENCE

Preface: These next questions ask about examples of individuals and communities that are resilient. You do not need to name names.

- 10) Can you give an example of a person who you think is resilient? They can be from inside or outside your community.
 - a. How do you know they are resilient?
 - b. What do you think has made them resilient?
- 11) Can you give examples of families that are resilient? They can be from inside or outside your community.
 - a. How do you know they are resilient?
 - b. What do you think has made them resilient?
- 12) Can you give examples of communities or nations that are resilient? They can be from anywhere.
 - a. How do you know they are resilient?
 - b. What do you think has made them resilient?
- 13) Do you think your community is resilient?
 - a. How do you know your community is resilient?
 - b. What do you think has made your community resilient?

E. TRADITIONAL STORIES OF RESILIENCE

Preface: We would like to know about stories that are told in the community that include examples of resilience.

- 14) Can you tell me about any traditional stories that include examples of resilience?

If the connection of the story to resilience is unclear, please ask:

- a. What part of this story is an example of resilience?

Final comment: Those are all the questions we have for you. Thank you very much for taking the time to participate in this focus group session. If anyone has anything else to add please feel free to come and talk to me (the facilitator).

INDIVIDUAL NARRATIVES INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Information about the interview:

Date: _____

Location: _____

Start time: _____

End time: _____

Interviewer: _____

Reminders for conducting this interview:

- Introduce yourself before you begin the interview.
- Make sure the participant is comfortable with the interview, the location of the interview, etc.
- Go through the consent form with the participant and have them sign it. If the participant is not comfortable with signing the consent form, you may read the consent form to them and have them give their verbal consent on tape.
- Please follow the interview protocol as closely as possible.
- Allow discussions to happen naturally, and to continue if you think the topics discussed are relevant to the research.
- If you feel the discussion is going off topic, refer back to the interview protocol to move on to the next question.

Please introduce this interview with the following preface:

We recently conducted focus groups in your community to talk about the challenges that your community has faced, and how your community has gotten through these challenges. The questions I will be asking you are based on the information we learned from the focus groups.

The purpose of this interview is to understand the roots of resilience. When I use the word "resilience" I mean the ability of a person or group of people who have faced significant life challenges, to adapt to or get through these challenges, and be well in their life. During this interview, I will be asking you questions about your own stories of resilience, words and sayings related to your stories of resilience, traditional stories of resilience that may have helped you through your life challenges, how you have helped others get through their own life challenges, and your outlook on future challenges.

This discussion will be recorded, and later we will transcribe the recording. We will then analyse the information from this interview and the other interviews we will be conducting to identify how people think about resilience, and identify ways to support resilience and healing in your and other communities.

A. YOUR STORIES OF RESILIENCE

Preface: We're interested in hearing your own stories of resilience. These first questions are about your personal experiences of life challenges.

- 1) Tell me about a challenge you have faced [Past/present/ongoing].
- 2) What helped you get through this challenge and be well?

Please follow up with the following questions if the participant does not talk about them:

- i. Did your thoughts or specific ways of thinking help you get through this challenge? If so, how?
- ii. Did your actions help you get through this challenge? If so, how?

- iii. Did any relationships or connections with other people help you get through this challenge? If so, how?
 - iv. Did your family or friends help you get through this challenge? If so, how?
 - v. Did your community help you get through this challenge? If so, how?
 - vi. Did your connection or experience with the environment help you get through this challenge? If so, how?
 - vii. Did your connection with your culture help you get through this challenge? If so, how?
 - viii. Did the society outside your community help you get through this challenge? If so, how?
 - ix. Did any other things that help you or make it harder for you to get through this challenge?
- 3) Are there other challenges you have faced? [return to question #2 and repeat up to 3 times]
- 4) How did getting through these challenges change you as a person?

Preface: Before moving on, I want to ask a few questions about how you see yourself. These questions have a few choices that you can use to respond. The questions are very simple so that we have some questions that make it easy to compare when we analyze the data.

- 5) Overall, how successful do you feel you've been in making it through your challenges:
- Not at all successful
 - Somewhat successful
 - Successful
 - Fairly successful or
 - Very successful
- 6) Overall, how well would you say you feel:
- Not at all well
 - Somewhat well
 - Fairly well
 - Well or
 - Very well
- 7) How satisfied are you with your life in general?
- Very dissatisfied
 - Somewhat dissatisfied
 - Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
 - Fairly satisfied
 - Very satisfied

Community specific questions based on data from the focus groups:

- 8) Some people in the focus groups we recently conducted have mentioned [refer to list of challenges compiled from focus groups] as important challenges. Did any of these challenges affect you?
- i. How did they affect you?
 - ii. How have you dealt with these challenges?
- 9) Were there any other community events that were challenges for you?

B. LANGUAGE, WORDS, AND EXPRESSIONS RELATED TO RESILIENCE

Preface: The next questions are related to the particular words and expressions that you might use to describe how you have gotten through life challenges. These could be in either [use relevant language], English or any other language you know.

- 10) What words, expressions, or sayings would you use to describe how you got through the challenges you have talked about?
- Do you know of [use relevant language] words that would describe this?
 - How would you translate their meanings into English?

11) Are these words commonly used in the community?

Community specific questions based on data from the focus groups:

- 12) Some people from the focus groups have mentioned [refer to list of words compiled from focus groups]. Do any of these words or sayings describe how you have gotten through the challenges that you have faced?
- Which ones?

C. TRADITIONAL STORIES OF RESILIENCE

Preface: We would like to know about traditional stories that are told in the community that may have helped you through life challenges.

- 13) Can you tell me about traditional stories told in your community that have helped you through life challenges?
- How has this story / have these stories helped you?

Community specific questions based on data from the focus groups:

- 14) Some people from the focus groups have mentioned [refer to list of stories compiled from focus groups]. Have any of these stories helped you get through your challenges? If so, how have they helped you?

D. SHARING KNOWLEDGE

Preface: We would like to know how you pass on knowledge to others about getting through life challenges.

- 15) Do you feel you've been able to share your experiences of getting through challenges with others?
- How do you do so?

E. FUTURE OUTLOOK

Preface: We would like to know about challenges that you feel you and your community might face in the future.

- 16) What do you think are some future challenges that you will face?
- How do you think you will get through these challenges?
 - Do you feel confident you will get through these challenges in the future?
- 17) What do you think are some future challenges your community will face?
- How do you think your community will get through these challenges?
 - Do you feel confident your community will get through these challenges?
- 18) How confident do you feel about being able to face future challenges?
- Not at all confident
 - Somewhat confident
 - Confident
 - Fairly Confident
 - Very Confident

19) How confident do you feel about your community being able to face future challenges?

- Not at all confident
- Somewhat confident
- Confident
- Fairly Confident
- Very Confident

20) Based on your experiences, how do you think resilience could be strengthened in your community?

F. FINAL QUESTION

21) We have now reached the end of the interview, is there anything else you would like to add?

Information about the participant:

Age: _____

Male / Female: _____

Cultural group or affiliation: _____

Occupation: _____

Education: _____

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