

# **The Original School**

## **A Unique Secondary School Experience for the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory**

**Original Feasibility Study Final Report  
Submitted to the Six Nations Life-Long  
Learning Task Force by Richard Hill on  
behalf of a Team of Educational  
Advisors**

**2021**

## Original School Feasibility Study

“When I was at the residential school, they raised me their way. Now you have a chance to raise your children your way.”

Calvin Miller, former student at the Mohawk Institute,  
1991

1820s: First School in the Mohawk Village

1828-1971: Mechanic's & Mohawk Institute

1878-1933: Six Nations School Board

1900: 12 Reserve Day Schools

?: Busing Students to Secondary School Begins

1956: Federal Government Funds Schools at Six Nations

1972: Indian Control of Indian Education Policy Report

1986 – Language Immersion Schools start

2016: Lifelong Learning Taskforce Begins

2021: Birth of the Original School Concept

# Original School Feasibility Study

## Table of Contents

### Original School Summary

#### Introduction

- **Our Moral Mandate: Believe In Our Children**
- **Feasibility Study Critical Questions**

#### 1.0 Our Findings

- **1.1 Current Situation: Schools Are Failing Our Students**
- **1.2 Current Secondary School Statistics**
- **1.3 Set Adrift: Psychology of Being Bussed to Distant Schools**
- **1.4 Potential Original School Student Populations**

#### 2.0 Proposed New School: Original School for Original People

- **2.1 New Vision: Finding Our Pathway**
- **2.2 New Philosophy: Replanting the Tree**
- **2.3 New Teaching Strategy: Growing the Roots**
- **2.4 Recovering the Culture: For the Sake of the Future Generations**
- **2.5 Healing the Wounds of History and Reconciliation with Our Past**
- **2.6 Overcoming the Legacy of the Mohawk Institute**
- **2.7 Characteristics of Original School Graduates**

#### 3.0 New Teaching Philosophy

- **3.1 Original School Core Courses**
- **3.2 Pedagogy of Peace: New Curricula Standard**
- **3.3 Original School Pathways**
  - **3.3.1 Rotinonhsón:ni Leader-In-Me Pathway**
  - **3.3.2 Sustainer-in-Me Pathway**
  - **3.3.2 Artist-in-Me Pathway**
  - **3.3.3 Builder-in-Me Pathway**
  - **3.3.4 Multi-Tasker-in-Me Pathway**
- **3.4 New Teaching Strategy: Staying Student Centred**
- **3.5 Genuine Knowledge for Developing Onkwehon:we Personalities**
- **3.6 Original School Code of Ethics**
- **3.7 Our Commitment to Onkwehonwehnéha: Role of Culture and Language**
- **3.8 Our Land-Based Pedagogy**
  - **3.8.1 Akwesasne Model**
- **3.9 Nutrition and Learning**
- **3.10 Original School Teacher Training**
  - **3.10.1 Developing a Teaching Strategy**

#### 4.0 Lessons From Within Our Culture

- **4.1 Longhouse Village Model of Education**

## **Original School Feasibility Study**

- **4.2 Summary of Rotinonhsón:ni Teachings**
- **4.3 Values and Ethics: Tradition of the Good Mind**
- **4.4 Bringing Haudenosaunee Values Alive**
- **4.5 Leadership Traditions**

### **5.0 What Our Scholars Say - Community-Based Scholarship**

- **5.1 Areas of Concern**

### **5.0 Facility and Site Requirements**

### **7.0 Next Steps: Facing the Challenge**

- **7.1 Working Group One: Accreditation & Curriculum**
- **7.2 Working Group Two: Teacher Training**
- **7.3 Working Group Three: Outdoor Education**
- **7.4 Working Group Four: Facility and Educational Infrastructure**
- **7.5 Working Group Five: Governance & Community Involvement**
- **7.6 Working Group Six: Nutrition and Whole Health**
- **7.7 Working Group Seven: Budgets and Fund-Raising**

### **8.0 Closing Remarks**

### **9.0 Original School Feasibility Study Project Team**

### **10.0 Appendices**

#### **10.1 Appendix I: Need Clarified: The Highlights of Community Reports on Education**

#### **10.2 Appendix II - Future Employment Opportunities in Arts and Culture identified by Cultural Human Resources Council, Ottawa**

#### **10.3 Appendix III: Lessons from Other Rotinonhsón:ni Schools**

## Original School Feasibility Study

# Original School Summary

Local artist and educator, Elizabeth Doxtator calls for a process of re-villagizing: “Traditionally, everyone in the village would provide care through on-going support, guidance and encouragement to the children during every step of their childhood. Older people were the teachers. They would help to identify with their insight, the unique gifts and strengths of each child. . . the older people would make connections between a child’s observable strengths and what could be their role within the village. This was done with much care, for the best interest of the whole village. They did this in order to guide and support them to their most suitable and vital role. This process made the entire village an accepting and open learning environment.”<sup>1</sup>

With this in mind, we are creating an educational village that is rooted in, and deeply connected to, the values, traditions and skills of our community. We have developed a proposal for what we are calling the Original School – An Original School for the Original People – a school that puts the students first and builds a solid foundation from Rotinonhsón:ni wisdom combined with academic and technical skills need to ensure a sustainable future. The Original School will become a reflection of the community ideals, and the community will become enhanced by what takes place within the students of the Original School.

Because we are the Original, Real People, we should have a place where that originality is celebrated. When we hear the word Onkwehón:we/Ogweho:weh, many of us think of our ancestors, the Original People. However, we are still Onkwehón:we, despite the fact that we live a very different lifestyle from our ancestors. What connects us to those Original People are a set of values, a unifying philosophy, a tradition of gratitude, and a common history. This can be the foundation upon which a new school can be built.

By focusing on the mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual needs of our youth, we will produce an original kind of school, with unique educational experiences, innovative ways to support our youth as they embark on their life-long learning pathway. In this way, it is possible to express ourselves as Onkwehón:we armed with both traditional skills and contemporary ways of doing things. It is not about living in the past. Being Onkwehón:we is to be thinking and acting for the sake of the future and the future generations. In facing that future, we need a wide variety of skills, a certain resilient mindset and host of creative problem-solving skills.

Every learner has inner traits that affect their ability to succeed, much of which goes untapped or minimized by modern education. All too often, colonization tends to get us to doubt the value of these inner traits, and we are forced to dance to some else’s drum. These negative emotions can become internal barriers if the learner has had traumatic personal and social experiences.

The Original School will create a welcoming environment in which our students will feel valued, honored, and safe. This seems obvious, but colonization and residential school have created a feeling of shame, and this creates a feeling of despair. The Original School, it’s setting, teacher and administrators must be dedicated to student affirmation and conduct a form of education that relevant to the lives of the

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<sup>1</sup> A Rotinonhsyón:ni Representation of the Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession, Ontario College of Teachers, 2019

## Original School Feasibility Study

students, and helps build self-esteem and self-reliance, but to forget the power in unity and the effectiveness of collaboration.

The atmosphere of the Original School will reflect cultural principles in relationships that it advocates. These relationships will help to encourage learning. The curriculum will help connect the students to their ancestral wisdom and develop the skills to practice cultural proficiency.

We will also be original in the way in which we combine traditional cultural strengths with modern-day skills and perspectives to end the victimization of our youth. Culture will not be an add-on or after-thought in this school. It will be the reason the school was created – to serve our youth well as they enter adulthood. This original approach will be outlined in this report in the hopes of stimulating a community-wide discussion in the next phase of this project. It is time to be both creative and concrete. Our children deserve our attention to this matter.

The Original School will have the means to give every secondary school student at Six Nations something unique to their educational journey. It gives them choice, it gives them freedom to follow their inherent gifts (mental, artistic, athletic, or other capacities), it lets them experience a secondary school that understands them.

Through five pathways the Original School will stand for diversity of learning styles, educational pathways options, and more capacity building in our students for their personal growth and potential career development:

### **Rotinonhsón:ni Leader-In-Me Pathway:** Community/Career/Postsecondary Education

The Rotinonhsón:ni Leader-in-Me pathway will empower the learners with the attitude, skills and tendencies to gain personal and interpersonal effectiveness. Leadership means self-management and self-discipline in order to build healthy relationships, increase social awareness, and have the skills to communicate, collaborate, and be responsible in decision-making. It builds upon critical thinking skills, employs creativity to seek constructive alternatives, and uses teamwork to sustain a whole society. The idea is the learners can lead their own lives as well as working well and encouraging the greatness in others (whether family, friends, neighbors, or colleagues).

### **Sustainer-in-Me Pathway:** Lifeways Immersion – Experiential Learning

This pathway is designed for those interested in land-based, experiential learning to recover, retain and sustain Rotinonhsón:ni heritage. Learners will gain life skills based upon ancestral knowledge and customary practices. They will also gain expertise in ecological knowledge, sustainable practices and food security. By learning the philosophy, stories, practices, and skills of our ancestors our learners will not only gain respect for their inheritance, they will be active participants for ensuring those traditions continue for another generation.

### **Artist-in-Me Pathway:** Creative Arts and Heritage Promotion

This pathway is designed for those interested in careers in the visual and performing arts, arts management, cultural resource management, and cultural tourism. Students will gain orientation and skills in the creative fields of study, as well as a variety of skills to protect and enhance our cultural heritage (historic sites, history interpretation, museum studies, arts management, library and archives

## **Original School Feasibility Study**

management, digital productions, travel & tourism, etc.). This is intended to provide exposure to new fields of study that address community-based needs of Six Nations and beyond.

### **Builder-in-Me Pathway - Specialist High Skills & Trades School**

This pathway is designed for those interested in developing practical skills in trades and self-enrichment. Learners on this Builder-in-Me Pathway will gain orientation and skills in a variety of household, garden, construction, food service, and technical trades so they can better enrich their own lives or enter trades careers. This is intended to provide the equivalent education an experiences and expertise offered through the Advanced Skills program on the Province of Ontario. It includes Cooperative Education experiences to connect the learners to community opportunities.

### **Multi-Tasker-in-Me Pathway – Interdisciplinary Skills Enrichment**

This pathway is designed to provide an interdisciplinary experience so that the learner could sample parts of the other four pathways. Students will gain orientation and skills in a wide variety of disciplines, drawing upon the strengths and experiences of the other learning styles. This is intended to provide more options for life-long learning. This pathway gives the learner ample opportunities to discover what gift they carry while exploring a variety of subjects and possible directions.

In addition, there will be core courses Health & Physical Education, Communication/English Skills, Rotinonhsón:ni languages, Computer skills, Mathematic Skills, Rotinonhsón:ni History, Indigenous studies, World Studies, Science, and Social Sciences and Humanities.

## Original School Feasibility Study

### Introduction

“We know that [Indigenous children] also hunger for a proper sense of self. The need to assist current and future generations of Indigenous youth to find their place and purpose through cultural and language revitalization is quite apparent. Indigenous children are much more than the colour of their skin, they are the products of their community and they have the right to know what that community is. They have the right to know where they have come from, where they are going, why they are here and who they are. The answers to such questions of life are not found in books. They are found in the experience of one’s relationship with family and with friends, and in the teachings of the community to which you feel you belong.”

The Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair, Chairperson of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Ninth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, New York, April 2010

Murray Sinclair, fresh from hearing testimony on the impact of the Indian Residential School system upon Indigenous people, summarized the need for communities like Six Nations of the Grand River Territory to take active steps to recovery our Indigenous intelligence and build strong relationships within our community in order to reverse the damaging impact of colonization.

Through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission testimony from those who attended the Mohawk Institute, and the more recent Day School settlements, the root cause of educational dysfunction and the subsequent negative attitudes about education have been uncovered. Generations of mistreatment, of forcing a culturally unresponsive curriculum upon our people have created a community-wide disconnect from our responsibility to provide the proper education to the future generations. We have let others assume that responsibility. It has not worked well.

In the past, we have been victims of education. The way that schools first appeared to Grand River, it forced families to make choices – usually toward assimilation and away from the way of life of our Ogweho:weh ancestors. This has created a negative legacy that undermined the sense of security and unity within the community. Further, in the modern era decisions were made to send our successful primary students off the territory to public schools in the surrounding communities. This was an unintended abandonment of our responsibility to educate our youth to our own standards. It also sentenced them to a system that was not sympathetic to their unique social and cultural needs. They often suffered from inequitable education services.

No matter how you look at it, the current secondary school experiences are failing to reach most of our children. The self-evident truths are that we are facing a massive dysfunction system with 70% high school dropout rate, poor school attendance, frequent delinquencies, impacts of substance abuse, atmosphere of bullying, racial discrimination and increasing alienation of parents in the education of their children.

Generations of our children were outsiders in the schools that they attended. Levels of racism against the Ogweho:weh varied from school to school and student to student. Not all the experiences in these out-of-community schools were negative or harmful. However, the overall drop-out and failure rates provide ample evidence that the current situation can no longer be tolerated. Only 56% of the 10 grade Indigenous students had acquired the credits necessary to be on track to graduate. (Source: GEDSB Regular Board Meeting Minutes, Feb 22, 2021)



## Original School Feasibility Study

That means that almost half are not likely to graduate.

Through community-based research we have identified the underlying causes of such dysfunctions which are within the structure of the current education system, as well as within the negative thinking of many of our students, who suffer from low-self-esteem and lateral violence.

We send our children away to secondary school that for the most part was designed at the turn of the last century is what has been called the factory model – a conveyor belt of short classes, one after another, with data and information pumped into their head, and subject them to several disconnected lesson each day. This model was intended to produce docile, non-thinking factory workers. Certainly, there have been some changes on that model, but the remnants of the colonial system remain when you consider that the primary duty of teachers, according the Ontario Education Act is “to inculcate by precept and example respect for religion and the principles of Judaeo-Christian morality and the highest regard for truth, justice, loyalty, love of country, humanity, benevolence, sobriety, industry, frugality, purity, temperance and all other virtues.”<sup>2</sup>

That recalls the Indian Residential School theology. It did not work then, and it will not work now. To fix the broken system, a fundamental re-make of secondary school-level education is necessary. This proposal identifies an avenue that we can take to improve the meaning of education in the lives of our children. As a community, we need to provide a school that counteracts low self-esteem, identity confusion and low educational goals. To do so, we need to develop a different mindset, one that believes in cultural congruency – how we educate is evidence of the quality of our culture.

We are proposing an education that has additional dividends beyond the Ontario provincial education standards. We will meet or exceed those academic standards, but will also balance those standards with Rotinonhsón:ni Life standards – the practical application of culture to improve life choices. This is an attempt to improve the ‘ecology’ of life for our children. Learning, doing, knowing, adapting, inventing, and living become one.

Previous studies and current inclinations point to Six Nations of the Grand River Territory building and operating its own secondary school to serve the 650-800 students that currently leave the community to attend secondary schools or have dropped out altogether. The potential population is estimated to increase to 1,000-1,200 in the next ten years.

Every community member of Six Nations is unique and needs a stimulating educational environment where they can grow physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and socially. For a secondary school to succeed at Six Nations we need to think differently about what it takes to motivate our youth to commit to life-long learning. The current secondary school practices that we subject our children to are just not enough to excite their interest and inspire their imaginations. The current situation and experiences of our youth at regional schools outside of the community indicates, beyond a doubt, that the current system is failing most of our students. We also must recognize that we have not done well to reconnect most of our children to the sources of knowledge about which Dr. Mohawk speaks.

This report will document those current failures as well as explore Indigenous educational philosophies and strategies that might be applicable on our territory. Whatever we finally determine is the way to move

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<sup>2</sup> Duties of Teacher, Education Act, Part V. noted in [https://pepper-mt.oise.utoronto.ca/data/note/132454/DutiesTeachersPrincipals\\_EdAct.pdf](https://pepper-mt.oise.utoronto.ca/data/note/132454/DutiesTeachersPrincipals_EdAct.pdf)

## Original School Feasibility Study

forward on creating a secondary school plan for Six Nations, we must keep in mind that the school, its educational philosophy, the mindset of the teachers and parents must be deeply rooted in, and reflective of, our cultural heritage. It is a great archive of information, knowledge, and wisdom that is missing from the daily lives of most of our children. This will require a different kind of school, a different attitude, and a different way to immerse our students in an atmosphere of compassion, kindness, and safety.

### **Our Moral Mandate: Believe In Our Children**

“We believe that our children should be educated in their community, with their peers, and taught by qualified educators, who know the community, the culture and the curriculum.”

Diane Longboat, Grand River Mohawk<sup>3</sup>

Every school has a culture. Diane Longboat believes that children, who have a strong self-concept and positive self-esteem that is based upon our worldview, will become respectful, self-sufficient, and self-determined Rotinonhsón:ni. We are inspired by this thought.

The question for our community at Six Nations is simple: Whose culture will impact on the hearts and minds of our children? Will it be the norms of mainstream culture that seeks to replace Indigenous culture with Western values, beliefs, and traditions? Or, will it be our own culture, which has sustained our ancestors for thousands of generations?

We gave ourselves a huge mandate. It is nothing short of revolutionizing what secondary educational experience can be here at Six Nations. Based upon previous educational studies, it became clear that our goal was to design an educational philosophy and strategy that helps the students achieve the following:

- Develop responsibility for their actions, emotions, attitudes, and behaviors.
- Take the initiative for their learning, be actively engaged in what they learn.
- Learn how to plan and set realistic goals.
- Do meaningful things that make a difference in their lives and within the community
- Have more awareness of cultural values and how they apply in their daily lives.
- Learn how to set and achieve priorities, better manage their time, and become more accountable for themselves.
- Become living examples of our school philosophy and shared values.
- Become empowered to solve problems with respect, consideration, and fairness.
- Learn the value of communicating without judgement, building trust and how to communicate more effectively. They will be able to overcome behaviors that get in the way of collaboration.
- Learn how to value each other’s strengths, and how to work well with others. They will value diversity and apply creative thinking and problem solving.
- Learn how to take better care of themselves, physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually as they seek meaningful ways to contribute to the overall quality of life at Six Nations.

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<sup>3</sup> Karonhianónhnha Tsi Ionterihwaienstáhkwha. (2018). Curriculum and Service Guide. <https://www.kecedu.ca/schools/karonhian-nhnha-tsi-ionterihwaienst-hkhwa/programs-and-services>

## Original School Feasibility Study

This is not to say that the current system does not attempt to address these very matters, however, the current drop-out and failure rates proves a more comprehensive re-think is needed. It is not a solution that can be applied to us. It needs to come from our community and embrace our children in new ways.

### Feasibility Study Critical Questions

These are some of the questions that we needed to address in developing this secondary school strategy:

*What is the heart of our education? - What do we really want to achieve?*

Based upon previous educational students, interviews with students and community consultations, it became evident that a culturally-based secondary education approach is the best way to build character, add meaning and contribute to youth's sense of self and purpose. Identity formation, connection to ancestral knowledge and dealing with the on-going colonized behaviours is primary.

*What is meaningful and motivating for our children? – What more can we be doing to help them succeed in school?*

According to the statistics, the current approach is not working. Education must make more sense to our youth by having real life connections and helps them to deal with the realities that they face. They need to see education as their tool to a better life for themselves, their family and their community. They must be supported in more meaningful ways as they deal with the matter expressed above.

*How can we nurture each child's unique gifts? - How do we individualize the learning experiences so that all learners feel valued and inspired?*

Each child is unique and needs help to discover their innate abilities and effective ways to nurture those gifts. The educational experiences at the Original School must bring out the best of all learners. This will require multiple learning styles, new educational strategies and more attention to their individualized learning pathway.

*How can we encourage social awareness and responsibility? – How can our secondary school experiences contribute to nation building and cultural revitalization?*

Our youth need to accept their responsibilities to environmental stewardship, global consciousness and community service. We will structure an educational experience that promotes these important aspects of life. Students have to see themselves as adding their personal strengths to the collective well-being of their community.

## Original School Feasibility Study

### 1.0

## Our Findings

### 1.1 Current Situation: Schools Are Failing Our Students

“The second major obstacle that we face is being able to participate with a chance of success when the elementary and secondary education experience is failing the majority of indigenous students. In my community of Six Nations every year we send about 100 students out to high school. We count ourselves fortunate if after four years 30 of those students graduate.”

Rebecca Jamieson (Tuscarora), President and CEO, Six Nations Polytechnic

Would you buy a car that worked only 60% of the time? How long would you keep your job if you were absent 40% of the time? Would you support an educational system in which 4 out of 10 of your children do not graduate? That is the situation we find ourselves in today. Rebecca Jamieson reminds us that we have become conditioned to expecting our children to fail at secondary schools. More accurately, that it the system in which we have placed our children. Something is dramatically wrong with how we are schooling our children. The current educational system is failing our youth. Time for a change. There is no doubt that the current educational system is failing to reach most of our youth in an effective way.

Currently, about \$61.3 million is being spent on education at Six Nations, serving 4,173 individuals, based on numbers reviewed by the recent Deloitte study. That works out to an average of \$14, 689.67 per student, however, the actual spending is different for secondary school learners. Currently about 650 Six Nations students attend out-of-community schools with an estimated cost per student at \$23,139.00 or currently about \$8.7 million total. Could we do a better job here with that kind of funding? Can we invest in the future of our children more effectively?

An Onondaga Chief once stated, “Education is good, but it takes our people away. We want people to come home and help us.” This concern is central to this report. How do we build a secondary school experience that place in our community and connects students to their community in more meaningful and productive ways? For Six Nations to survive as a distinct community, to thrive as an Indigenous nation, and for our youth to find a meaningful place in the world, we need to enhance the character of our learners so that their educational experiences are so empowering and fulfilling they will want to be more responsible for the quality of life at Six Nations. Out of this concern the concepts behind what we are calling the Original School were born.

The Fraser Institute provides an annual ranking of academic performance (EQAO testing) at publicly funded school on Ontario. Ten of the eleven schools finishing last in the 2015 ranking of over 3,000 Ontario schools are First Nations schools from remote northern communities. Six Nations schools have been taking the tests since the mid-2000s and ranked higher than most other First Nations schools in Ontario, but they were still near the bottom of the list. Four Six Nations elementary schools and one New Credit elementary school, Lloyd S. King, all fell in the bottom 20 in the Grand Erie District School Board (GEDSB) scoring.

## Original School Feasibility Study

Six Nations schools ranking:

- Top school is Oliver M. Smith Kaweniio Elementary School, which ranked 2,735 in the province and 68th in the GEDSB.
- I.L. Thomas came in second on Six Nations, 2,801 in the province, 71st in the GEDSB.
- Jamieson came in third on Six Nations, 2,841 in the province, and 74th in the GEDSB.
- Emily C. General came in last on Six Nations, 2,961 in the province, and 83rd in the GEDSB.
- J.C. Hill was not ranked because it is a junior high school and EQAO tests in grades six, seven and eight are not held.

Whether the tests are culturally biased or not, the indicators of poor academic achievement impact on the readiness of our students to move on the secondary education.

### 1.2 Current Secondary School Statistics

Currently, students from Six Nations students have the choice of six secondary school programs for which bussing is provided:

- McKinnon Public Secondary School (199 Six Nations students)
- Hagersville Secondary School (148 Six Nations students)
- Brantford Collegiate Institute (76 Six Nations students)
- Pauline Johnson Collegiate and Vocational School (9 students)
- Tollgate Technological Skills Centre (19 students)
- Cayuga Secondary School (15 students)
- Less than six at North Park, Waterford High School, GELA

In addition, there are several alternative programs that served 251 Six Nations students. Only 24 students graduated from these programs. (Student populations from 2018-19):

- 32 students at Nations
- 151 students at Newstart Community Based Learning Centre - smaller and more flexible learning environment for students up to 21 yrs. of age. (These two programs have been amalgamated into one)
- 14 students at RATIWEIENTEHTA'S – THEY ARE LEARNING, partnered with Ganohkwasra Family Assault Support Services to offer a Section 23 classroom at Youth Lodge facility (13-21 yrs.) - therapeutic counselling and services while a Grand Erie Teacher provide individualized academic programming.
- 38 students at OHAHI:YO PROGRAM – youths (14-21 yrs.) in partnership with the Ministry of Child and Youth Services – Youth Justice Services Division. Through a holistic approach, students are provided individualized program planning and support toward their full re-engagement into schooling and community.
- 16 students at Ohsweken School Within A College program is a partnership between Grand River SCWI (Grand Erie and BHNCD SB), Grand River Employment and Training, and Mohawk College. SWAC program is part of the School-College-Work Initiative (SCWI) for 18-21 yrs. old - seamless transition for students from secondary school to college – at GREAT, dual credit program.

## Original School Feasibility Study

- (Number of participants unknown) School College Work Initiative (SCWI) Programs The School Within A College (SWAC) program is part of the School-College-Work Initiative (SCWI). SCWI is a co-operative effort with a mandate to assist in creating a seamless transition for students from secondary school to college.

For the recent past, 635 students from Six Nations participated in postsecondary school services and alternative programs. The Deloitte study of 2018 identified a total of 660, with possibly another 10-12 from KGPS. Accurate numbers of dropouts and failures are not clear, so the total potential population for secondary school services are not known.

Brantford College Institute is at 87 per cent capacity, followed by North Park Collegiate at 75 per cent, and Pauline Johnson Collegiate at 56 per cent. Tollgate Tech Skills Centre is operating at 42 per cent student capacity, according to the district reports.

The primary schools at Six Nations are funded and operated by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), which directly oversees seven schools across the country, including five in Six Nations. There are two private immersion schools as well. There is no reliable number of Six Nations students who are attending private schools off the reserve. Assembly of First Nations noted that chronic underfunding of First Nations schools has created a First Nations education funding shortfall of \$747 million in 2010-2011, and a cumulative funding shortfall of over \$3 billion since 1996.

Some members of our community may have not only survived your secondary school education, you went on to post-secondary and have developed a good career. You are part of a rare group. It is true that more of our citizens are graduating from post-secondary, we must think about those who don't even make it through high school. What is our responsibility to them?

Time has come for innovation. We need to try something radically new. The same old 'solution' will not longer work. It is not a time to revert backwards. Instead, it is a time to be creative in using our cultural strengths to help our students gain confidence, a stronger sense of self-worth, to nurture those innate gifts and embrace their own learning because it.

We need an entirely different educational philosophy, a different educational strategy, and a different atmosphere into which we immerse our children from the ages of 14 to 17. In addition, many of our children have emotional issues from the impact of colonization. The Original School recognizes that healing intergenerational trauma is key to the future success of our learners. There needs to be an active holistic strategy to provide the necessary supports for our learners to feel comfortable and confident. This will take some time.

### 1.3 Set Adrift: Psychology of Being Bussed to Distant Schools

Local scholar Dr. Theresa McCarthy conducted a 1994 study at Cayuga Secondary School at Cayuga, ON, which at that time was known as the school that traditional families usually sent their children. Today, very few students from Six Nations attend that school. McCarthy interviewed several students to assess their attitudes and experiences in transition to a non-Rotinonhsón:ni secondary school. Such transition was full of conflicting emotions such as:

- Tensions
- Apprehension

## Original School Feasibility Study

- Fear of racism and prejudice
- Stereotypes
- Misunderstanding, being labeled 'dumb and stupid'
- Little sympathy for missing school due to ceremonies
- Feeling outnumbered
- Tension over not standing for the Canadian anthem
- Feeling disrespected
- Anti-Native bias in textbooks and inaccurate history
- Assumption of inadequacies of Indigenous learners
- Friendships are usually transitory, limited to in class or at school.

These are typical of findings for the last fifty years. We have not been able to eliminate this psychological roller-coaster ride that we place on children by sending them to schools outside of our community. On the other hand, some of the Six Nations students in McCarthy's study stated that going to schools away from the community offered the following:

- Learning how to cope with racism can be an asset.
- More athletic opportunities.
- You learn to defend yourself as Onkwehón:we.
- Culture, language, and ceremonies fosters identity no matter what.

The energy spent on defending themselves against ignorance and racism could be better spent on expanding the sense of themselves as Onkwehón:we and building their intellectual skills in a more positive direction.

In another study, local scholar Sabrina Redwing Saunders found that "13% stated that students who leave to attain secondary, post-secondary, or to seek employment will have to rest on the strength of their cultural identity if they are to remain a cultural person. The off-reserve youth identity was discussed as being in a —war zone and —under attack by the [local] students/staff and curriculum. As such, those who question their own identity may be more willing to rescind their own being and transform into the person which they feel will be allowed to succeed by the dominant community."

School as a war zone. Some find that it is easier to get through school if you just blend in, but they risk losing their cultural identity and resilience. It is like the Stockholm Syndrome in which the victim takes on the attitudes of the oppressor to survive. This can lead to mental confusion and elusion; emotional blocks and lack of feeling which results in depression and aggressive behaviors; social anxiety and sense of estrangement; and decline in physical wellness due to poor diet, lack of sleep and lack of connection to the natural world.

Why are we letting this happen to our children?

To be fair, some of our youths do quite well within the current system of education. Indications are that these students succeed because they are mentally gifted, have strong family support for education, have good study skills, and have a zest for learning. We need to build those capacities in all learners. However, even the successful students speak of the cultural shock of leaving their home community for secondary school elsewhere, coping with stereotypes, and learning that self-silence is a coping strategy that will help them get through the system.

## Original School Feasibility Study

Change is overdue.

### 1.4 Potential Original School Student Populations

Six Nations, a predominantly Rotinonhsón:ni community, has the largest population of any First Nations reserve in Canada. That population is currently estimated at 13,000-13,788. In 2016 census it was 13,448. The Six Nations Community Plan of 2019 which recorded 11,754 living within the community of the total membership of 23,626. The report projected a population growth of 2.6% and estimated that the total population within the community will be 19,244 by 2025. However, another accounting as of December 31, 2019, the total on reserve population was listed as 12,892 with another 14,667 off reserve.

A 1997 education report by the Secondary Education Research Project identified secondary school population (age 15-20) to be 825 members on reserve in 1995 (of a total of 1,509 of that age as members). At that time 72% of on reserve students received secondary school education off reserve. At that time, about 590 students were bussed off reserve. There were about 33 high school students in language immersion, the first year ninth grade level was offered. That report noted population growth of 2.6%, but it is unclear as to where that percentage came from.

A 2019 Six Nations Membership chart on residency identified the following <sup>4</sup>:

- 5 to 9 yrs. old – 592 on reserve; 436 off = 1,366 total
- 10-14 yrs. old – 914 on reserve; 666 off = 1,580 total
- 15-19 yrs. old – 988 on reserve; 741 off = 1,729 total

In 2021 the number of potential secondary students were identified the national census may have been underestimated:

- 5 to 9 yrs. old – 756 on reserve
- 10-14 yrs. old - 754 on reserve
- 15-19 yrs. old – 811 on reserve

Grand Erie District enrolment data as per Education Service Agreements shows a serious decline in total number of students from Six Nations from 646 in 2015-16 to 475 in 2019-20. It is unclear as to why this situation exists.

The following five-year trends:

- Grade 9 – 127 down to 93
- Grade 10 – 127 down to 86
- Grade 11 – 119 up to 121
- Grade 12 – 116 up to 175

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<sup>4</sup>(<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=3529020&Geo2=PR&Code2=35&SearchText=Six%20Nations%20%5BPart%5D%2040&SearchType=Begin&SearchPR=01&B1=All&GeoLevel=PR&GeoCode=3529020&TABID=1&type=0&wbdisable=true>)



## Original School Feasibility Study

- Special Ed (up to 21 yrs) – the numbers are no longer identified separately from above.

Graduation rates are another matter according to the latest report. Progression rates are not identified for each grade and only the following numbers were provided:

- 2015-16: 102
- 2016-17: 78
- 2017-18: 73
- 2018-19: 73
- 2019-20: 66

If the number is for seniors graduating, it would mean that 66 of 175 seniors graduated, or less than 40%.

Since the current secondary school services are offered for students up to 21 years of age, the census information would indicate that the estimated secondary school populations could be more like 900 potential students. Apply the 2.6% growth rate, the number of students could increase to 1,134 by 2030.

In 2021 GEDSB reported that Grade 9 enrollees have declined from 132 to 93, a drop of about 28%. (Source: Grand Erie-Six Nations Education Services Agreement Annual Reports, Summary of 2006-2020) of a total of 8,852 secondary students in the Grand Erie system, 581 were covered by Tuition agreements. However, 2019 Secondary Enrolment numbers totaled 7,968 showing an overall increase since then of 884 students overall.

The Deloitte study of 2018 identified a total of 660, with possibly another 10-12 from KGPS. Accurate numbers of dropouts and failures are not clear, so the total potential population for secondary school services are not known. For the recent past, 635 students participated in postsecondary school services and alternative programs, as reported by the district.

A report prepared by Rafal Wyszynski, superintendent of businesses and treasurer for the board, said 66 per cent of capacity at the board's 13 high schools was used in 2019, compared to 69 per cent in 2018. Enrolment at the high schools decreased to 7,885 from 8,133. (Numbers seem to be inconsistent) At the same time, enrolment at the board's elementary schools increased to 18,347 in 2019 from 18,021 in 2018.

Province-wide, hundreds of schools have closed or merged in recent decades, the result of shifting demographics and smaller families. Roughly 300 Ontario schools were slated for closing leading up to the moratorium, and about 100 of them have been shuttered. In Southwestern Ontario, 12 school boards have had to grapple with the expense of about 55,000 empty student spaces.

Enrolment of Six Nations students by Grade (2019-20):

- 9th grade – 20.6%
- 10th grade – 17%
- 11th grade – 24.9%
- 12th grade - 37.4%

Despite a continued enrollment drop in GEDSB schools, from 2006 to 2016, the Indigenous population increased at four times the rate of the non-Indigenous population. Indigenous peoples tend to have

## Original School Feasibility Study

higher fertility rates than non-Indigenous people, particularly in the case of First Nations people and Inuit. The status First Nations population saw off-reserve and on-reserve growth with a 30.8% increase from 2006 to 2016.

Secondly, response mobility played a key role in the demographic growth of non-Status First Nations and Métis population during 1996-2006. Response mobility refers to the phenomenon where individuals changed their identity from one census to the other.<sup>5</sup>

Indigenous populations have a much higher percentage of children and youth than the non-Indigenous population. Indigenous children, aged 14 and under, represent almost one-third (27%) of the total Indigenous population while the corresponding figure of non-Indigenous peoples stands around 16%.

Furthermore, the number of individuals who self-identify as Indigenous grew across all groups between 2001-2016: the Métis population doubled, and the First Nations and Inuit populations grew by respectively by 60% and 44%.

We need more information on the number of graduates from 8th grade within the community. However, we feel strongly that if successful, the Original School will attract and retain more students than the current off reserve system. In addition, a sizeable amount of the estimated 3,600 off reserve Six Nations members of secondary school age, would be interested in attending the Original School. An exact number is difficult to estimate.

First Nations Engineering Services (2021) provided the following summary of projected total intermediate student enrolment for Six Nations schools for:

### I.L. Thomas (Grade 8)

- 2029-30: 337
- 2039-40: 421

### Emily C. General (grade 8)

- 2029-30: 249
- 2039-40: 278

### OM Smith (grade 8)

- 2029-30: 282
- 2039-40: 314

### Jamieson (grade 6)

- 2029-30: 245
- 2039-40: 273

First Nations Engineering projected 15-19 yr. old cohort population projections for Six Nations as follows for the first likely decade of operation of the Original School (based upon overall on-reserve population increase from 15,919 to 17,745 for 2029-2038):

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<sup>5</sup> Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, 2012-13

- 2029 - 1,013
- 2030 – 1,037
- 2031 – 1,060
- 2032 – 1,085
- 2033 – 1,107
- 2034 – 1,136
- 2035 – 1,212
- 2036 – 1,280
- 2027 – 1,351
- 2038 – 1,424

Given all of this data, current trends and the unknown factors, we estimate that the potential population for the Original School could easily reach 1,200. However, since it will take time to build community/parental confidence in the school, a starting population would be closer to 600. After discussion with the life-Long Learning Task Force, it was decided to plan for 1,000 students for the Original School.

## Original School Feasibility Study

### 2.0

## Proposed New School

## Original School for Original People

“[Our] cosmology places the Haudenosaunee in a balanced family relationship with the Universe and the Earth. This philosophy taught us to treat the Natural World with great care. Our institutions, practices and technologies were developed with a careful eye to their potential for disturbing the delicate balance we lived in.”

John Mohawk (Seneca), Ph.D., 1978

Seneca scholar John Mohawk reminds us that at the core of our identity and belief is the quality of the relationship with the Mother Earth and the forces of nature that impact on the quality of our lives. For our educational services to work at retaining our identity and beliefs, Earth-centred or land-based models are to be considered.

“If you go back to the time of Creation, when the Creator made mankind, he made them by molding them from the earth—that’s why we call it O:gwehó:weh. O:gweh is what we are from... O:gweh means the real thing from Mother Earth—that’s what we are,” stated Cayuga Chief, Jacob Thomas. If we except the cultural premise that we are made from the clay of the earth, that she is our mother, then we return to our mother to recover our core understandings of what it means to be O:gwehó:weh/ Onkwehón:we – the Original People of this land.

If we accept a second cultural premise that the memory of our ancestors’ rest within that Mother Earth, then a new approach to education must help our learners recover that original connection to place, and the knowledge that rests within this place.

Thus we have crafted what we are calling the Original School – a place of sharing for the Original People (Onkwehón:we). The Original School, however, is not just about the best of the past. It is forward looking to include a wider base of knowledge and wisdom that our children will need as they face an uncertain future. This means that there will be a merger of ideas, strategies and solutions. Just as we need modern science to undo the damages done to the environment by pollution, we also need the ideology and practice of doing no more harm to the environment, understanding that our lives depend on our Mother, the Earth.

Countless Onkwehón:we scholars have shown that cultural knowledge is paramount in creating better mental health outcomes for young people. Providing opportunities for them to celebrate their Onkwehón:we identities through ceremony, song, language learning and other traditional practices is a powerful form of healing.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Freeman, 2017; Deer, 2016; Thomas et al., 2016; Thomas, 2012

## **Original School Feasibility Study**

The current situation of off-reserve secondary education, our learners are often socially isolated from larger student population. This often results in negative consequences. In the Original School, constructive relationships are essential to reducing social isolation, fostering intergenerational transfer of knowledge, and reconnecting the learners to their peers and community mentors. Outdoor education and experiential learning will help to facilitate the maintenance of a new social network.

To achieve this kind of educational experience, we propose a secondary school that is comprised of four “academies” that provide more choice and better addresses the variety of learning styles within our community. We call our approach the Original School because it is a unique strategy to build capacities for the Original People. The Original School will provide a clearer pathway for our students to personal growth, academic success, and career development.

Most parents want secondary school to lead to increased opportunities for their children. We have designed an approach that can achieve that as well as provide a solid skills development so that the graduates are already equipped to face life in a meaningful way. We have chosen to think of these four specialty areas as house posts in the Original School. Students who attend the Original School will have four options of the type of education they wish to pursue.

### **2.1 New Vision: Finding Our Pathway**

Our vision is to develop a conceptual plan for an independent secondary school operated under the authority of the community at Six Nations of the Grand River, accredited by our own standards, and serving the individual and community needs of our learners, parents and families. The long-term vision of the school is to create more choice in educational experiences that enables different learning styles to be supported and nurtured. Every student will find the approaches to education attainment and social maturity that best suits their personality and innate skills.

What will make this possible will be active listening and open communication between all interested parties – students, parents, caregivers, teachers, administrators, educational specialists, and community elders – as we move forward to take the concepts expressed in this report and develop into an operational plan for a new school. Only together can we change the course of secondary education. Meaningful dialogue will be encouraged within a climate of trust and respect.

This goes beyond improved classroom skills, the Original School will offer essential learning in ancestral knowledge, life-skills, social-skills and emotional capacities for self-care, self-respect, and self-improvement as we focus on the whole person. This in turn will provide for constructive nation-building and improve the overall wellness of our community.

### **2.2 New Philosophy: Replanting the Tree**

A resurgence educational paradigm is about a shift in consciousness – in our teachers as well as our students. The regeneration of our identity, recreating the Rotinonhsón:ni frame of mind, and strengthening the cultural practices is the forerunner to revitalization of our personal and collective strengths. This would also produce the strength of character and resilience for our learners to succeed no matter what endeavors they tackle in the future. It is about building capacities to not just survive, but to thrive.

## Original School Feasibility Study

Overcoming the internal barriers requires Indigenous resilience – the ability to move forward when schooling is difficult or unsupportive. Our learners need to be able to overcome setbacks. They also need to know how to persevere through their studies. This requires that they see some relevance of themselves to what they are studying.

Think of this as gaining inner determination through a new sense of hope. This hope can come from a mentoring approach in which the learner feels respected. This also requires a degree of self-confidence so that the learner can gain a better sense of personal goals, skills needed to attain those goals, and a belief in one's self to persevere in obtaining and mastering those skills.

Relationships are the foundation of the Rotinohsyón:ni worldview. Our philosophy is that the strength of those relationships will determine the character of our citizens. Therefore, the Original School will focus on rebuilding healthy relationships, internally as well as externally.

The metaphor of this process is the replanting of the Tree of Peace. About a 1,000 years ago, the Peacemaker assembled to newly appointed Chiefs into a circle. He gave them their original instructions about how to work with the people to maintain peace. To help them understand the importance of their responsibilities, he planted a tall white pine and called Tsionerahtase' Kó:wa (Tree of Peace). The Peacemaker said that peace will be everlasting provided the people believe in peace and use their Good Minds to build personal and communal strengths to have a fully functioning society.

### 2.3 New Teaching Strategy: Growing the Roots

"I'm like a mother, because I spend eight hours every day with them, more time than their parents do. It's almost like an emotional connection. I am not here just to teach them. I am here to be a role model. I am also here to learn from them. This is something you won't get in a mainstream school."

Kahontineh Swamp, former Akwesasne Freedom School Teacher and now Secondary School Counselor at Ahkwesasne Mohawk Board of Education

Kahontineh Swamp reminds us that school can be an extension of a healthy family in which children grow with a relationship with the earth, with intergenerational unity, a deep sense of responsibility to do good in the world. A proactive school creates an atmosphere that promotes the idea that students need to take more responsibility for their learning and the choices they take. Teachers must also be well trained in the school philosophy so that everyone is pulling in the same direction. The school must also be administered with cultural values as the core of how the school operates.

"To me, holistic education is about having choice in your learning journey. It's about problem solving. It's more child-centered rather than adult driven and allows for more fluidity. Holistic teaching and learning also involves our connection to the cosmos and the spiritual world. I also think that holistic education is about the awe and wonder of life," stated Sherri Vansickle, a Six Nations educator.

Vansickle organized an experiment on water drum making held at Six Nations, conducted by PR Hill. Her goal, along with co-manager Margot Francis, was to open up non-school-based opportunities for youth who often have limited options for connecting to cultural practices. They found that the Grand Erie School District had some shortcomings, because "Indigenous modes of education are unfunded, viewed with suspicion, or seen as an afterthought." Instead they wanted hands-on, earthy-based experiences for the students.

## Original School Feasibility Study

The woodshop, the land and the bush became the classroom. Students learned about architecture, engineering, safety, natural medicines, horticulture and ancestral knowledge, along with some key Cayuga language expressions. They learned technical skills, as well as patience and the cultural importance of the drum. Then, it was capped when the students sang songs using the drums they made.

“There was no complaining, no criticism, and, most importantly, no whining! They all got busy and did exactly what they had been taught earlier,” reported Vansickle on student behaviours. The project coordinators realized that PR created a profoundly non-directive learning space, in which he mentored the students through a long, slow process, listening to each other, working through frustration and pleasure, and solving problems together. No one was shamed. No one was judged for the product they produced by their own hand. There was no anxiety. It was a pleasurable learning experience.

“These young men are provided with the opportunity to learn, explore, try, make mistakes, and solve problems, all in our gentle way, without fear of ridicule, criticism, or shame—something denied my grandmother at residential school,” concluded Vansickle. The Drum Making workshop revealed that material practice (making crafts), story (Oral tradition), ceremony (spiritual context), and matriarchal epistemologies (connection to the Mother Earth and the powers of regeneration) can be experienced in a thoughtful space. “This project was not just about sanding, drilling, and chiseling—it was also about the meaningful interaction between the young men and significant adults who are cheering them on in life,” noted Vansickle.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, mentorship is the strategy to achieve the anticipated results of the Original School. This will include mentors from the community, teachers as mentors, and peer mentors where the older students help to mentor the younger students. In addition, the spaces within and surrounding the Original School need to be conducive to that kind of sharing and learning. This means that there needs to be a variety of teaching environments. The support staff of the Original School will also be mentors, supporting cultural content and experiential learning. The staff has to hold the philosophy of this school close to their heart. They have to believe in what the school is doing, and treat the students accordingly. How the staff communicates with the learners will be evidence of the validity underlying cultural values. Our community has to become more involved in providing avenues for caregivers to be more involved in the education of their children. The family needs support during the secondary school experiences. It is the culture in action. The White Roots of Peace emanate from the Tree of Peace and provide a pathway for students to reconnect with their ancestral roots.

### 2.4 Recovering the Culture: For the Sake of the Future Generations

“Haudenosaunee culture has a life of its own that we all contribute to and take from. The culture balances out the outcome for us. We need to be more proactive about the future. To apply the culture in more meaningful applications, we need to learn how to do cultural application as a decolonizing activity to further our knowledge and give more meaning to a culture that has the capacity to support change and growth.”

Robert Antone, Ph.D. (Oneida)<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Margot Francis & Sherri Vansickle (2018) Gana’Jôh: Haudenosaunee Pedagogies of the Drum Letters From the Woodshop, *World Futures*, 74:7-8, 490-502, DOI: 10.1080/02604027.2018.1485437

<sup>8</sup> Citation needed

## Original School Feasibility Study

Culture is the act thereof; it is in the doing. However, that act of making culture real requires a comprehensive understanding of the why it exists and how it works, as well as an understanding of our personal roles within the culture. The culture needs to make sense to our youth and provide real solutions to their real-life dilemmas.

For the last thirty years the community at Six Nations intensified their efforts to preserve the heritage languages of our ancestors. The community responded by developing Oliver M. Smith Kawenni:io Elementary School and I.L. Thomas Odadrihonyanita Elementary School were the first community response to have language and culture incorporated into primary education. Next was Kawenni:io/Gaweni:yo Private School, and Skaronhyase'kó:wa - The Everlasting Tree School. Six Nations Polytechnic, as an Indigenous post-secondary institution, also has the promotion of culture and language at the heart of their programs. The movement to a culture-centred education has already begin and has firmly taken root.

By the same token, the Original School is not a missionary school that requires students to learn only one belief system. The school will not force religion or spiritual beliefs upon its students. The focus will be on creating a way of life that is inspired by traditional values, a way of life that will enable the learners to pursue a future on their own terms. By focusing on core values and shared experiences, the students can carry on their individual beliefs in harmony with the life skills gained through their experiences at the Original School.

We seek not to go backwards, nor return to a pre-contact state of being. Instead, we seek to use the underlying philosophy of the culture as a springboard to the future. Along with creative problem-solving skills and contemporary skills in academics, our graduates will be better equipped to lead productive lives no matter where their personal paths take them.

We seek to increase the capacity of *Cultural Fluency*, which takes cultural literacy (knowledge of one's culture) to the next level and puts cultural values into action in personal decision-making. Heritage language acquisition can help advance this strategy, in that certain cultural values and principles are reflected in the Rotinonhsón:ni languages.

The new curriculum of the Original School would create learning experiences that foster holistic wellness, a desire for life-long learning, community engagement, and retrospection as to how this learning can be applied to address issues faced by the Six Nations community.

In this sense, this is more than acquiring a secondary education. It is about developing the next generations that are strong, confident, and grounded in Ogweho:weh beliefs and values, which in turn will build a stronger community. It is about the future of our community and the way of life we wish to preserve. Think of this as cultural immersion rather than a culturally-based education.

Our culture provides ample proof that passing on knowledge, experience and perspective was important to our survival as a distinct people. In former times, the home, fields, gardens, fishing camps, woods, and harvesting camps were the places where age-appropriate sharing/teaching took place.

There were three primary ways in which children learned in the old longhouse village days:



## Original School Feasibility Study

- *Through Storytelling* – Oral History explains how the world was meant to function, and human responsibilities to creation. The stories reveal key teachings and underlying ‘laws’ of the universe.
- *Through Observation and Mentoring* – Adults, elders, artists storytellers, and leaders set the tone through their own conduct, and served not only as role models, but also mentored youths to find their meaningful place within the society. Observing carefully, listening attentively, and benefiting from the experience of others were valued skills. Children learned the rhythms of life by observing and practicing what they saw the adults doing.
- *By Trial and Error* – Hands-on experimentation and learning to master life skills such as pottery-making, hide tanning, and wood carving required a master mentored and the time and space master processes that lead to self-sufficiency. Older children helped the younger children learn eye-hand coordination.

The Original School can revive those practices and use traditional values as the underpinning of a new educational philosophy and practices.

Our ancestors had a worldview that can still benefit our people today. They believed in what is called Ka’nikonhrí:io, or the Good Mind, and prided themselves on an ability to use the power of reason and the power of creativity to navigate the issues they faced. One founding belief was that we are given a mind so that we can figure out the best course of action to follow, personally and collectively. By bringing Good Minds together, combining their mental strengths, our ancestors proved that cooperation, teamwork and consensus building were essential skills. By having Ka’nikonhrí:io as a core principle in how we operate, the journey of the students at this school will build the type of character necessary to rebuild our nations and return peacefulness to our community.

To recover our cultural congruency, there has to be a rebalancing of gender matters. “The other significant cultural difference [between Indigenous and Western cultures] is the all-encompassing matrifocal or women-centered foundation of Haudenosaunee culture rooted in the constructs of Mother Earth, Grandmother Moon, Three Sisters’ foods, and clan mothers who select the leadership and identity based on who your mother is,” writes Oneida Scholar Robert Antone.

This matrilineal organizing principle establishes that masculinity is always understood as complimentary to the whole. As such, Antone emphasizes that the “masculine energy of our communities has a greater responsibility to self-examine and rebuild a sense of manhood that works with women to create a world free of violence. The journey to understanding decolonization in the context of masculinity requires letting go of power and control behaviors.”<sup>9</sup>

Additionally, we have to consider that our LGBTQ2S+ youth also find connection and meaning within the culture, and not be subjected to prejudice or discrimination.

### 2.5 Healing the Wounds of History and Reconciliation with Our Past

“The Haudenosaunee father and mother should never hold angry disputes over their child because the angry words of the child’s parents could cause a child to feel bad and lonely. They should always be thankful to the Creator for being able to have a child grow from them, because it is the Creator’s gift.”

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<sup>9</sup> Innes, Robert A. and Anderson, Kim, eds. *Indigenous Men and Masculinities*, University of Manitoba Press, 2015

## Original School Feasibility Study

Huron Miller, Grand River Onondaga Elder <sup>10</sup>

Huron Miller reminds us that the sad reality is that many children in our community have experienced life-altering traumas or have been raised by people who have also suffered from traumas and have passed them on to their children. The intergenerational transfer of those traumas and the resulting dysfunctions is a vicious circle of colonization that is more clearly understood by our community.

Much of the anti-social behaviors in some of our secondary students can be traced to inherited trauma. A healing component is needed to recover from the abuses that took place at the Mush Hole and the day schools on the territory, as well as in foster care, adoptions and even the homes of some of our people. Adverse childhood experiences can have serious physiological, social, emotional, and academic impacts of trauma and adversity on our students. Mental health matters have become increasingly significant as roadblocks to learning. Some educators have found mental health matters to be the number one issue in Indigenous education.

In brief, the obstacles to learning experienced by these traumatized children include:

- Trouble forming relationships with teachers - They've learned to be wary of adults, even those who appear to be reliable, since they've been ignored or betrayed by those they have depended on.
- Poor self-regulation with strong emotions – They've not had soothing and calming experiences.
- Negative thinking – They believe that they are bad and what happened to them was their fault, therefore people will not like them.
- Hypervigilance – Their fight or flight response kicks in often, overly alert to danger.
- Executive function challenges – something in the classroom triggers emotional outbursts.

The Original School has to be equipped to respond to the mental, emotional, social needs of the students through becoming expert in trauma-informed education. Teachers have to become It will take constant dialogue with students and their families to address those issues. In this way, the Original School will be a place of healing that calls upon our knowledge carriers to support the students. We can call upon the talents and Good Mind of our community mentors to provide the kind of supports the students need. This will be directly opposite to what the Indian Residential School experiment sought to destroy.

German educator Bernd Ruf conducted a training workshop at the Everlasting Tree School on Waldorf educational strategies for crisis intervention for children suffering the short and long-term impacts of trauma. He noted the need to create a sense of safety in the school, building trusting relationships, and recovery of self-worth, self-control, and self-efficacy, in order to overcome feelings of fear, shame, guilt, mistrust, negative self-concept, and aggressive, sexualised, resigned, foreign, and self-damaging behaviour. Ruf advocates the use of the healing circle, storytelling, dance and rhythmic movement, and artistic expression to fostering healing. This is in alignment with our culture and these strategies can easily be folding into our overall teaching strategy.

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<sup>10</sup> Miller, Huron, unpublished manuscript, Native American Centre for the Living Arts, Niagara Falls, 1980.

## Original School Feasibility Study

### 2.6 Overcoming the Legacy of the Mohawk Institute

The Mohawk Institute first opened in 1828 as the Mechanic's Institute to teach Christianity and the trades to youth from the Mohawk Village (present-day Brantford). In the beginning, the language of instruction at the oldest "Indian" residential school in Canada, was Mohawk. Parents wanted their children to go there to learn how to be more self-reliant.

However, things turned dark, and abuse of the children grew out of control. In 1904, one fourteen-year-old girl was whipped severely, locked in a dark cell, and fed only water for three days as punishment for trying to run away from the school. Another girl was beat with a belt until she fell into an epileptic fit for being in the dorm at the wrong time. When asked why she took such a beating, she said that she did not want to be raped by the principal. Boys were also abused both by the staff and the other boys at the school.

Students were forced to fight one another, and gangs roamed the grounds making each day dangerous. Many children were left heartbroken, feeling abandoned by their relatives and psychologically berated and humiliated by the staff at the Institute. These events still affect our community. While many children of our community did not attend the Mush Hole, today most families are descended from or related to someone who did. In addition, the recent settlement of abuses at the day schools in the community showed that the impact of trauma was more widespread.

Our Original School has to be a place of reconciliation with our collective past, a place where we help the students understand what happened to their parents and grandparents, some of whom passed on their traumas to their children. Our youth need to understand how historical traumas still live within as well as some of our families, and what they can do to break the cycle of dysfunction. Our culture has mechanism for recovering the Good Mind by uplifting grief and trauma that can be used at the Original School.

### 2.7 Characteristics of Original School Graduates

It is easy to envision the kind of graduate we would like to see emerge from their secondary school experience here in the community. We want our youth to have a strong sense of their self-worth, of their abilities and skills, as well as common sense to make good choices in life.

If we are successful, a graduate of the Original School would have gained the following:

- Better Sense of Self and Positive Self-Image
- Better application of culturally-based skills
- Increase heritage language fluency
- Stronger family engagements
- More Fulfilling Achievements
- More Academic Skills
- Healthier and Safe Learning Environment
- Less Violent and Risky Behaviours
- More Engaging and Supportive Teachers
- Better Rotinonhsón:ni Nutrition and Whole Health

A graduate of the Original School would have the following traits:

- Self-Confident without being arrogant

## Original School Feasibility Study

- Have critical thinking skills to truly understand the nature of creation and social organizations
- Have creative problem-solving skills
- Maintain caring relationships
- Use the Good Mind to promote peace, equity, and unity
- Be knowledgeable about contemporary affairs
- Understand the lessons of Rotinonhsón:ni history
- Rely on cultural and personal resilience
- Able to communicate well
- Secure in their identity and responsibilities

To be fair, some of our youths do quite well within the current system of education. Indications are that these students succeed because they are mentally gifted, have strong family support for education, have good study skills, and have a zest for learning. We need to build those capacities in all learners. However, even the successful students speak of the cultural shock of leaving their home community for secondary school elsewhere, coping with stereotypes, and adopting self-silence as a coping strategy that they think will help them get through the system.

Our students will no longer be marginalized in their own world. Community education must be inclusive, responsive, and culturally congruent. This is not an alternative; it is our Rotinonhsón:ni pathway to success. Education is dependent upon the learners understanding who they are, where they come from, and where they are headed. The trauma of colonization often interferes with our understanding of our history, and the trauma of residential school still reverberates within our learners. We have entered an era of rediscovery of what it means to be Onkwehón:we. The Original School can complete that circle of self-discovery and allow our students to move past the colonial haze and find their rightful place in the world.

## Original School Feasibility Study

### 3.0

## New Teaching Philosophy

“The idea of a free individual is foundational to Mohawk culture. Each individual is a free person. This includes infants and elders, children, adults and the future generations yet to come. No one person has power to command another. Consent is freely given from one individual to combine their power with that of another.”

Jeremy Green, Ph.D., Principal at Kawennio/Gawenniyo Private School

Jeremy Green reminds us of the foundational principal of our culture – freedom. Our old society did not use coercive force to control people’s conduct. However, people had an internal moral compass the limited their behaviors according social norms. People are free to use the power of the Good Mind to determine the best course of action to be taken that provides mutual benefits, for themselves and others. People have to do the thinking necessary to promote peace.

This requires a different kind of philosophy and different kind of culture within the school, one that promotes healthy relationships and builds self-esteem. There were two types of recommendations from the 2019 Life-Long Learning Task Force. First, they developed a new philosophy of education based on the following principles:

- Increase student motivation & family support
- Meet the needs of the whole person
- Make courses relevant and hands-on
- Reduce Peer Pressure/drug and alcohol abuse
- Increase family commitment

If we accept, for a moment, that the philosophy of education is the means by which a society transmits its culture and values unto its young, then we have to ask what is the nature of that culture, values, and beliefs as far as Six Nations is concerned? Another way to think of this is to ask ourselves: What are the character traits we hope to see in the graduates of our secondary school? What drives their sense of self, and what abilities do they need to have to manifest that sense of self?

We also have respect that not everyone here has the same set of values. Our community desire for a culturally-based approach to education needs to acknowledge that not every family wants to embrace traditional practices. We have to look deeper to the underlying values that resonate within all belief systems. At the same time, we need to recognize that a solid values-based education will include the mindset that can lead to lifelong learning, employability, and compassion for building community. All children can find meaningful educational experiences in this process no matter what path they choose to follow. A strong education will prepare them for a life of work and for interaction in the off-reserve world as they will become more engaged and more responsible for their learning and their behaviors

## Original School Feasibility Study

We recommend that the new philosophy of education be based on Rotinonhsón:ni thought and values, with an emphasis on Developing and Keeping a Good Mind, and that the items listed above are issues to be addressed using that philosophy. Therefore, the philosophy of the Original School is as follows:

“We believe that our tradition provides the pathway forward to healthy, contributing learners. Our culture has values that remain applicable to modern life. Colonization has affected our people and the pathway forward has to promote the healing and strengthening of our youth so that their minds can be freed from the inherited trauma and be able focus on gaining their respected place within Haudenosaunee society. We need strong children to understand the value of culture in building a way forward, for themselves and for their community. The Original School can give them the time to explore meaning of life and develop the skills to make a good life for themselves, their families, and the community.”

We respect different belief systems and will create a safe space for their children within the Original School to find their way to express and manifest their gratitude in real ways. John Mohawk, Seneca scholar, noted that storytelling the collective hearing of these stories and cultural narratives, allowed Rotinonhsón:ni youth as the listener of these teachings, to actively engage in deep thinking about their content and meaning. Mohawk believed that storytellers did not tell the listener what the story mean, but the listener had to draw meaning through contemplative thinking. This active listening was a traditional skill.

We believe that our tradition provides the pathway forward to healthy, contributing learners. Our culture has values that remain applicable to modern life. Colonization has affected our people and the pathway forward has to promote the healing and strengthening of our youth so that their minds can be freed from the inherited trauma and be able focus on gaining their respected place within Rotinonhsón:ni society. We need strong children to understand the value of culture in building a way forward, for themselves and for their community. The Original School can give them the time to explore the meaning of life and develop the skills to make a good life for themselves, their families, and the community.

Critical thinking is another foundation skill. John Mohawk advocates that we are a people who cherished the process of thinking. In examining how the Great Law of Peace came about, Mohawk concludes: “The ownership of the thinking which took place then, and the generation of thinking which needs to take place now are our job. That's what we'll find when we follow the roots to their source. The White Roots continue to represent a tradition of thinking about ourselves as a species, and the responsibility to use our minds so that we continue to survive and create a good world for our children seven generations into the future.”

This means that through storytelling and active listening, our learners can use their minds, fueled with concrete ideas of values, to assess, critique and analyze any situation, and if the thinking is right, come up with workable solutions.

There is another teaching that we are to look to the earth to see the faces of the coming generations. This means that we have to ensure that the world that those faces are going to be born into is safe, healthy and vibrant. Over time, our graduates will be responsible for ensuring that long-term safety.

There will be five different pathways to graduation from the Original School, offering the learners more options to plan their own educational experiences and skills development. Connecting all of the pathways will be a different philosophy of education – everyone will succeed at the Original School. The school will

## Original School Feasibility Study

mentor students in their chosen pathways, while providing core values-laden education. Drawing from our rich cultural legacy, the Original School will create a new atmosphere for transferring knowledge that is learner centered, culturally based, and intended to enhance local nation building.

This strategy is based on five important paradigms (sets of ideas):

- 1) *Leadership Paradigm*: Everyone can be a leader of their own lives; through decolonizing and re-villagizing our students gain the confidence to assume responsibility for their thoughts, words and actions.
- 2) *Potential Paradigm*: Everyone has Indigenous intelligence within their DNA; innate understandings rest within and can be discovered, nurtured and mastered through experiential learning that connects the student to ancestral knowledge.
- 3) *Change Paradigm*: Changes Starts with Me, and spreads through good relationships; students become agent of constructive change by the role models then respect, mentoring by knowledgeable elders and developing compassion for others.
- 4) *Motivation Paradigm*: Educators empower students to lead their own learning; and to seek meaning through exploration of traditions, land-based experiences, and growing sense of community.
- 5) *Education Paradigm*: Educators and Families partner to develop the whole person; the student and the community heal from the trauma of colonization and everyone discovers their rightful lace within Rotinonhsón:ni society.

The Original School is dedicated to providing a wider range of educational experiences so that students can gain a better understanding of the unique nature of public service – working for the benefit of their community and larger society. In order to have those kinds of experiences in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade, a solid foundation in Rotinonhsón:ni perspectives and academic achievement is necessary. In addition, students need emotional and cultural support to increase their quality-of-life capacities, no matter what future pathways might entail.

Our proposed plan addresses that diversity by offering options for their educational pathway. No one-size will fit all our learners, so choice is a critical aspect of our plan. Different avenues based upon the inherent gifts and inclinations of the students will provide a more individualized pathway. In this way, learners will be more active participants in guiding their own learning. No longer will we hear, “Why do I have to take this course? What does it have to do with my real life?” Our courses will reaffirm the value of knowledge transfer and sharing in order to embolden and empower the next generation. We stand for creativity and innovation in increasing opportunity to live a fulfilling life.

The first task for the Original School is to address the needs of the whole child, increasing emotional/social intelligence. We have come to understand the importance of learning styles. Not everyone learns the same way. Generally, according to the research, Indigenous learners find the most comfort in stimulating, inviting and nurturing environments. We need to offer a variety of learning styles in order to keep the interest of our students in their learning. Indigenous learners learn best when they can connect the new information with their own experiences. This creates a desire for inquiry and if supported properly by the teacher and curriculum, the learners will excel. Scholarship shows that this works best when the knowledge transfer is accompanied with hands-on learning, personal mentoring, and subjects that resonate with Indigenous intellects.

## Original School Feasibility Study

### 3.1 Original School Core Courses

The first two years at the Original School will provide the core courses with exposure to each of the pathways so that students will have ample time and experience to choose a major for their final two years. In this way, they can make an intelligent choice. All students will participate in educational programs and mentoring to increase their awareness and practices to help them:

- Understanding and managing emotions
- Setting and achieving positive goals
- Feeling and showing empathy for others
- Establishing and maintaining positive relationships
- Make responsible decisions
- Communicating more effectively

In addition, all students will participate in heritage language acquisition and advancement, as well as learn an array of digital skills. Depending on how the credentialing works out, there would be a full set of required courses in the sciences and humanities, as well as a wide variety of electives. Later, we will recommend a working group be created to determine the nature and scope of the core courses.

### 3.2 Pedagogy of Peace: New Curricula Standard

“The White Roots continue to represent a tradition of thinking about ourselves as a species, and the responsibility to use our minds so that we continue to survive and create a good world for our children, seven generations into the future,” John Mohawk, Seneca Scholar <sup>11</sup>

All students will be grounded in the cultural teachings, basic conversational levels of fluency in the Rotinonhsón:ni languages, and core academic subjects. This will also include self-awareness; self-management; responsible decision making; relationship skills and social awareness. These principles will be further developed in the four academies. There will also be shared recreational and athletic programs, healthy food services, and shared student guidance services. Students will share in some aspects of each of the four components during the secondary school experiences.

Foundation teaching such as the Creation Story, Original Instructions and the Kaianere’kó:wa (Great Law of Peace) will be shared in deeper levels of meaning through the four years at the Original School.

Using the Pedagogy of Peace Model <sup>12</sup>described by Kawennenha:wi (Lindsay Brant), Tyendinaga Mohawk, is a purposeful teaching and learning model that builds upon the three core teachings of the Rotinonhsón:ni Great Law of Peace, which are peace, strength, and a Good Mind. This is a learner-centred approach to teaching and learning, through using compassionate educational frameworks and techniques to lead all learners through their learning journey with integrity, optimism, loving kindness, and support.

This approach infuses knowledge of cultural teachings, Rotinonhsón:ni Ways of Knowing, holistic well-being awareness and trauma-informed care, to create a compassionate approach that educators can

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<sup>11</sup> Mohawk, John, “Origins of Iroquois Political Thought,” *Northeast Indian Quarterly*, Summer 1986.

<sup>12</sup> Drawn from Brant, Lindsay, Pedagogy of Peace, <https://www.queensu.ca/ctl/teaching-support/decolonizing-and-indigenizing/pedagogy-peace>



## Original School Feasibility Study

adopt/adapt, and model in order to create inclusive learning environments and classroom communities for all students.

Pedagogy of Peace draws upon three core values of Peace, Strength and a Good Mind to create goals by which our learners will endeavor to live their lives. It also provides learners with motivation to build peaceful relationships and connections – within yourself, with your family, community, nation and Creation. Additionally, students will develop a concept of the Four Directions that connects them to rhythms of the earth and a holistic model that balances emotional, physical, spiritual and mental aspects of life represents by the four roots of the Tree of Peace seen below:

### **1 Skennen (Peace) – A State of Balance and Harmony**

A sense of peace comes from training yourself to be balanced in all four directions or ways of being/feeling/thinking which means grounding yourself emotionally, spiritually, physically and mentally. You can do this by being in connection with yourself, your family, your community, your nation, etc. You can also find peace by living and connecting or relating to things such as Creation, or the Natural World, Land, Places/Spaces, Ceremony, Ancestors, and more.

### **2 Kahsatstenhsera (Strength) – Power of the Mind to Create Unity**

Individual and collective strength can come from many places, internal strength, ancestral strength through memory, connection, stories, culture, ceremony, and strength. There is an emphasis on strength, empowerment, and humility through thinking Seven generations ahead to ensure we take only what we need and leave enough for those coming up after us.

### **3 Kanikonhriyo (A Good Mind) – Ability to Think with Compassion**

You can develop a good mind by getting to know yourself and doing any healing work you need to do to help support and strength your holistic wellbeing. You can also develop a good mind in relation to or connection with your family, community, and relying upon your cultural teachings, ancestral knowledge, and other interconnected relationships with land, Creation and Creator.

The Pedagogy of Peace gave us a starting point from which we developed the Original School Teaching Philosophy. This approach gives students more options for a wider variety of learning styles and personal aspiration. The courses will be good for the head (intellect), heart (emotions and identity) and hands (practical and expressive skills). The goal of this common educational experience will be help students gain personal responsibility for their actions, emotions, attitudes, and behaviors.

### **3.3 Original School Pathways**

We propose that the Original School be a campus in which students can find a pathway forward that suits their needs, personalities and vision of the future.

There will be five different pathways to graduation from the Original School, offering the learners more options to plan their own educational experiences and skills development. Connecting all of the pathways will be a different philosophy of education – everyone will succeed at the Original School because the teachers will mentor students in their chosen pathways, while providing core values-laden education. Drawing from our rich cultural legacy, the Original School will create a new atmosphere for transferring knowledge that is learner centered, culturally based, and intended to enhance local nation building.

## Original School Feasibility Study

The strategy behind the secondary school, based upon previous research and community consultations will be simple: *No one will fail at being Ongweho:weh*. Each will find their path and achieve support and encouragement along the way. The graduates of this new school will have begun to nurture their inherent gifts and find a course of study that is most gratifying, most uplifting, and most enabling to face life as an adult. To achieve such a school, we will have to redefine what our children need, rethink the way in which we teach, and restructure their secondary school experience, here in the community at Six Nations.

Dr. Carol Cornelius (Wisconsin Oneida) believes that an apprentice-based method of education is embedded within Ogweho:weh philosophies of education. Hands-on learning keeps students interested in what they are learning. Positive, actual life experiences can promote lifetime learning. The student-centred approach, which places the student in direct relationship with those experiences and has a pace of learning to keep their interest over time. Combined with inter-generational knowledge transfers, the learner is uplifted intellectually, emotionally, and culturally.

Expertly trained teachers will be able to teach inherent Ogweho:weh concepts in nearly all subjects. Former Six Nation Librarian Sabrina Redwing Saunders believes that such teachers also need stronger skill sets in both pedagogy and classroom management. In other words, to achieve new results, we must have a school that applies creativity to what to teach, how to teach and how to help the students feel personally connected to what is being shared.

The five components of the Original School are as follows:

- Rotinonhsón:ni Leader-In-Me Pathway: Community/Career/Postsecondary Education
- Sustainer-in-Me Pathway: Lifeways Immersion & Experiential Learning
- Artist-in-Me Pathway: Creative Arts & Heritage Promotion
- Builder-in-Me Pathways: Specialist High Skills & Trades School
- Multi-Tasker-in-Me Pathway: Interdisciplinary Skills Enrichment

### 3.3.1 Rotinonhsón:ni Leader-In-Me Pathway: Community/Career/Postsecondary Education

“Our Ancestors dreamt and thought of us, without ever knowing our faces. All those many generations later, we now stand at a crossroads in which the decisions of today will greatly affect those of the future.” Kanen’tó:kon Hemlock, Kahnawà:ke Mohawk, 2020<sup>13</sup>

Oneida scholar Robert Antone advocated for an approach to transformational learning based on the Seven Spans paradigm from the Kaianerkó:wa, which refers to “the quality of person one has to be to be a leader.” Antone states that, according to the Great Law of Peace, seven spans of skin are necessary to be a good leader, and those seven spans result from “journey[ing] through seven circles of life experience.” A teaching is passed on for each circle of life experience, and these teachings contribute to the development of the Good Mind.<sup>14</sup> Learning to cope with undue criticism, keep emotions in check, and committing to a central goal of serving the people are important aspects of traditional leadership.

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<sup>13</sup> Hemlock, K., *Entiethi’nikonhratihéntho’ We Will Pull Their Minds Along Building a Framework Incorporating Leadership Development into the Mentor-Apprentice Process for Adult Second-Language Learners*, MA dissertation, University of Victoria, 200.

<sup>14</sup> Antone, R. (2013). *Yukwalihowanahthu yukwanosaunee tsiniyukwaliho:t^ As people of the Longhouse, we honor our way of life tekal^hsal^ tsiniyukwaliho:t^ praise our way of life* (Doctoral dissertation). State University of New York, Buffalo.

## Original School Feasibility Study

Helping student assume more responsibility to be the leader in their own life is a critical part of the educational experiences at the Original School.

The Rotinonhsón:ni Leader-in-Me pathway will empower the learners with the attitude, skills and tendencies to gain personal and interpersonal effectiveness. Leadership means self-management and self-discipline in order to build healthy relationships, increase social awareness, and have the skills to communicate, collaborate, and be responsible in decision-making. Many people equate leadership with a formal position of authority. But we believe anyone can be a leader by intentionally leading one's own life (leading self) and working well with and encouraging the greatness in others—whether family, friends, neighbors, or colleagues (leading others).

Rotinonhsón:ni Leader-in-Me pathway is about:

- Life Readiness
- College Readiness
- Leadership Readiness
- Career Readiness

This component is a special school that prepares students to become Community Leaders and succeed in Post-Secondary Education. Based upon the proven techniques of the Leader-in-Me approach to social emotional learning, this process allows children and adults to acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. It is also premised on an advanced study in academics that coincide with personal development.

This pathway is designed for those interested in academic advancement, organizational management and post-secondary education. Learners on this Leader-in-Me Pathway will gain orientation and skills needed to face the future head on. This is intended to increase both cultural fluency and academic readiness. It draws upon the experience of our community members who have been successful at post-secondary education, and provides more intensive learning experiences in problem solving, team building, leadership skills, literacy & communication skills, and addressing the social, educational, economic and political needs of our community at Six Nations.

We understand that to be an effective leader, one has to have a certain kind of personality, one that is kind and caring, yet, serious and thoughtful. We will explore the kind of personality traits needed to be a good leader as well as the leadership skills sets needed to lead our people through changing social political, economic and cultural changes.

Our leadership strategy is based upon the model *Entiethi'nikonhratihéntho'* - *We Will Pull Their Minds Along, Building a Framework Incorporating Leadership Development into the Mentor-Apprentice*, developed by Kanen'tó:kon Hemlock. Strong, visionary leadership were the hallmark of Rotinonhsón:ni culture and governance that asks a key question: "Is what we are doing, and the way we are living, going to sustain our people into the future?" Our Leader-in-Me learners will gain the knowledge, understanding and skills to determine the nature of critical choices needed for the kind of changes needed for the future generations to be stronger and healthier, both individually and collectively.

Leaders-in-Me Skill Sets will include the following:

## Original School Feasibility Study

- Speaking clearly and effectively
- Active listening with intent
- Critical thinking
- Writing effectively
- Organizational skills
- Working cooperatively and collaboratively
- Dispute Resolution Techniques
- Building Consensus
- Creative Problem Solving
- Relationship Building
- Resource mobilization
- Empowering Others

In gaining traditional leadership skills, the Original School will have an active Mentor-Apprentice Program to perpetuate Rotinonhsón:ni leadership development. This methodology has proven effective on language acquisition and Hemlock developed a leadership program that can address community needs in international relations, food sovereignty initiatives, economic development, community or nation governance structures, amongst others.

The Leader-in-Me Pathway is focused on gaining the skills and capabilities to address the wide variety of social, economic, health, and governance subject matter. These attributes can serve the students in a variety of life situations. It will also help them better understand community dynamics and their civic responsibilities to build stronger nations.

In order to achieve this we believe the following knowledge and skills will be necessary for all our leaders and community workers to master. This is a simple summary of where we can begin:

### **Rotinonhsón:ni Knowledge**

### **Rotinonhsón:ni Skills**

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 1) Creation Story Teachings | A) Understanding Rotinonhsón:ni patterns of thought       |
| 2) Original Instructions    | B) Ability to listen and reflect                          |
| 3) Ogweho:weh Philosophy    | C) Thinking Holistically – Turn philosophy into practice  |
| 4) Cycles of Ceremonies     | D) Building Constructive Relationships                    |
| 5) Oral Histories/Stories   | E) Learning to adapt while keeping cultural values intact |
| 6) Great Law Teachings      | F) How to cultivate and use the Good Mind                 |
| 7) Clan Governance          | G) How to come to One Mind                                |
| 8) Horticultural Heritage   | I) How to cooperate and work together                     |
| 9) Aesthetics and Symbolism | H) Think metaphorically & embrace solutions               |
| 10) Shared History Lessons  | I) Able to Navigate through troubled waters               |

Students in the Leader-in-Me Pathway learn both traditional and contemporary management strategies and workshop ideas to maximize individual strengths; self-responsibility; teamwork; stewardship; accountability; forward thinking; pitching-in; mentorship; civics; and community service.

We are not trying to replace current traditional leadership. Instead, this is a way in which our youth will learn to be more responsible to themselves, their families, clan, and community. They will be more active

## Original School Feasibility Study

in leading their own lives in a good way. They can then be called upon to fulfill leadership roles within the community.

The Rotinonhsón:ni Leader-in-Me unites student, staff, and families around a common goal to prepare students with college, career, and life readiness skills that are necessary to thrive in today's ever-changing, fast-paced society. It builds upon critical thinking skills, employs creativity to seek constructive alternatives, and uses teamwork to sustain a whole society. Combined with global awareness, communication skills, social-emotional learning, experiential learning, and value driven problem solving, the graduates of the Original School will have the skills and courage to head on to a career or higher education. This requires a new kind of culture within the school that create safe space for all learners, and a whole educational system that supports the development of a principle-centered life.

A positive school environment in which learners are valued and respected, increases student participation in developing their inherent gifts and engage with other in common cause. This has proven to increase academic performance, school attendance and less disruptive behaviors.

Our Rotinonhsón:ni Leader-in-Me Pathway is based upon our oral history and our pragmatic experiences in the past. By learning the principles of the Kaianere'kó:wa, our learners will be given a variety of opportunities to workshop how these values can apply to their lives. It provides the mental, cultural and social tools necessary better manage personal lives – to be a leader of your life, rather than suffer with colonized baggage.

The learners will gain an understanding how Rotinonhsón:ni law actually works, how people's voices matter and how people, organizations, clans, and nation can use the process of consensus to come to one mind. Through historical case studies, the learners will see how leaders of the past dealt with a variety of matters and understand how reason can be employed instead of coercion, bullying or threats.

The community of tradition and process of coming to one mind will also be employed in how the Original School is operated. The circle process will be used to administratively, as a learning model and for student decision-making on school policies and procedures. There will be focus on post-secondary preparation with more intensive academic enhancements for those who want to continue on to college and university.

To achieve this, the focus will be on three critical functions:

- 1) Leadership – Students have to be responsible for their behaviors and social-emotional learning is essential; Families must be engaged to support this kind of personal leadership.
- 2) Culture – Rotinonhsón:ni values will be used to create a supportive school environment; students will be engaged respectfully and attendance and achievement will improve; teachers will find their work even more satisfying.
- 3) Academics – Increase proficiencies in Rotinonhsón:ni, English and French literacies; increased reading proficiencies; increased math proficiencies; more effective teaching techniques; student-led learning to increase personal responsibility for life-long learning.

The Leader-in-Me Pathway will draw upon the leader-in-me strategy known as the See-Do-Get Cycle. When you change the way you See things, it influences what you Do and the results you Get. <sup>15</sup> The idea

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<sup>15</sup> Franklin Covey, <https://www.leaderinme.org/what-is-leader-in-me/>

## Original School Feasibility Study

is the learners can lead their own lives as well as working well and encouraging the greatness in others (whether family, friends, neighbors, or colleagues).

### 3.3.2 Sustainer-in-Me Pathway: Lifeways Immersion – Experiential Learning

Tsi Ní:ioht tsi Wa’akwanonhsón:ni - The Way the House Was Built

“[Our] cosmology places the Haudenosaunee in a balanced family relationship with the Universe and the Earth. This philosophy taught us to treat the Natural World with great care. Our institutions, practices and technologies were developed with a careful eye to their potential for disturbing the delicate balance we lived in.”

John Mohawk (Seneca), Ph.D., 1978<sup>16</sup>

Seneca scholar John Mohawk reminds us that at the core of our identity and belief is the quality of the relationship with the Mother Earth and the forces of nature that impact on the quality of our lives. For our educational services to work at retaining our identity and beliefs, Earth-centred or land-based models are to be considered.

Every community member of Six Nations is unique and must have a stimulating educational environment where they can grow physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and socially. In order for a secondary school to succeed at Six Nations we need to think differently about what it takes to motivate our youth to commit to life-long learning. The current secondary school practices that we subject our children to are just not enough to excite their interest and inspire their imaginations. The current situation and experiences of our youth at regional schools outside of the community indicates, beyond a doubt, that the current system is failing the majority of our students. We also have to recognize that we have not done well to reconnect the majority of our children to the sources of knowledge about which Dr. Mohawk speaks.

We come from a culture and lifestyle that promoted respect, sharing and consensus building. Our ancestors were constantly building a house, both as a home and as a metaphor for social cohesion. This house was built upon core teachings and cultural foundations. We will draw upon those primary concepts to build a new form of education.

The pathways start by asking a basic question: “Is what we are doing, and the way we are living, going to sustain our people into the future?” Students will explore the many aspects of that question, re-examining the critical choices necessary to change the conditions so that future generations would be stronger and healthier, both individually and collectively.

The purpose of this component is to keep the traditions of the past alive by learning reliance on nature and the ability to harvest sustenance and resources through traditional life skills. This sets in motion a different way of existing on the land.

Connection to the land is an important part of physical, mental, social, and spiritual wellness. Indigenous communities are already experiencing the effects of the climate crisis, and will increasingly, and disproportionately, be affected by changes in the future. Severe weather, changing temperatures, increased garbage and algae in bodies of water, already-high costs of living, and existing colonial

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<sup>16</sup> Basic Call to Consciousness, Akwesasne Notes, 1978

## Original School Feasibility Study

settlements and resource-development projects all affect the land, and subsequently, the connection that Indigenous peoples have to the land. We can rebuild our connection to the land, which in turn strengthen personal identity, and ultimately, a more meaningful existence and active participation in community. Following the mandates expressed in the Thanksgiving Address. This approach could help us achieve the following:

- Provide dynamic holistic experiences in three seasons: autumn, winter and spring.
- Offers travel experiences in a natural setting for grades 9 to 12 students.
- Extend classroom inquiry learning within a variety of subject areas into hands-on learning.
- Connect students and teachers to the land in meaningful ways from Indigenous and Western perspectives.
- Create a practical application of Teaching by Doing.

“We suggest that a food system pedagogy, based on traditional teachings and principles from specific Indigenous nations, is the only authentic route to a decolonized and equitable food system,” wrote Suzanne Brant and Keith Williams of FNTI at Tyendinaga.<sup>17</sup> Our communities have begun a social movement back to the garden. The Original School will incorporate its own Rotinonhsón:ni food system – a way in which our learners are involved in food cultivation and harvesting from nature, transforming crabs and game into tasty meals that are served each day, and learn a new level of appreciation for heirloom foods, Rotinonhsón:ni nutrition and improve their personal relationship to food.

Growing food is an important cultural tradition. Kanehsatà:ke began a Gardens of Hope program to produce food for the local food bank. Local students have been essential to the garden project. “I believe that it's important to feed ourselves properly,” said Karyn Murray, the eco-agriculture officer at Kanehsatà:ke Business and Economic Development, who oversees the project. “I appreciate the opportunity to be able to teach these young ones that are working with me this summer about food security, about growing your own food, and what you could use as different methods rather than turn to pesticides.”<sup>18</sup>

Many learners currently suffer from a lack of knowledge about their own identity, history, and culture. It is not their fault. This is the consequence of colonization. However, much of this can be re-learned and re-applied to their daily lives. This Lifeways Immersion component seeks to keep the life-enhancing traditions of the past alive in the next generation. It takes the notion of cultural camp to new levels. It is not about living in the past. Instead, it is about applying traditional life skills for the sake of the future while keeping the underlying values intact.

Oneida scholar Robert Antone reminds us that it more than just planting corn: “for a Haudenosaunee agriculturalist, it is not simply about farming but about the wholeness of one’s relationship to the land, culture, teachings, ceremony, and spirit.” The Three Sisters are essential food sources as well as essential for ceremonial life. Our learners can explore the deeper meaning of spiritual and physical sustenance, and reconnect as a Haudenosaunee agriculturalist with the cosmos, with each other, and with the

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<sup>17</sup> Williams, K., & Brant, S. (2019). “Good words, good food, good mind: Restoring Indigenous identities and ecologies through transformative learning.” *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, 9 (Suppl. 2), 131–144. <https://doi.org/10.5304/jafscd.2019.09B.010>

<sup>18</sup> Deer, Ka’nehshi:io, “Kanesatake fosters food security with Gardens of Hope,” CBC News, Aug 16, 2020. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/kanesatake-garden-hope-food-security-1.5685521>

## Original School Feasibility Study

natural world. Antone advocated that bundling this knowledge into the curriculum will “build self, family, clan, and community, which, in turn, builds nation.”<sup>19</sup>

This pathway is designed for those interested in land-based, experiential learning to recover, retain and sustain Rotinonhsón:ni heritage and life skills. Learners on this Sustainer-in-Me Pathway will gain orientation and life skills based upon ancestral knowledge and customary practices. They will also gain expertise in ecological knowledge and sustainable practices. It draws upon the legacies of the ancestors to life in harmony with the flow of nature, harvesting sustenance, providing food security, mastering heritage crafts and skills to ensure a sustainable future. It includes courses in geography, environment and resource management.

Rotinonhsón:ni knowledge will be the foundation of environmental education. Through that knowledge in combination with effective land-based experiences the learners understand our inherent relationship with the land; the roots of sustainable economies; avenues for natural healing; and making cultural values a real-life experience. It is a transformative process that decolonizes our thinking about nature, and re-indigenizes our conduct in a culturally-congruent way. Land-based learning is also an effective way for teaching Rotinonhsón:ni languages as such ways of learning reveal the intelligence behind the language. By learning the philosophy, stories, practices, and skills of our ancestors our learners will not only gain respect for their inheritance, they will be active participants for ensuring those traditions continue for another generation.

“We all have that common issue of development, colonization, western education coming into our cultures and it’s how we approach these challenges that can help us retain our cultures. Even if you lose the most integral thing in your culture, which is the ability to self-sustain, you can still find ways to retain your cultural teachings in new forms. a lot of people will never go back to the traditional life they may have experienced, but instead find new ways, based on old ways, to ensure our kids aren’t underdeveloped in their cultural understanding. The values, perspectives and teaching remain. We ensure they still serve us in the life that we lead today,” stated Brian Rice. Ph.D.<sup>20</sup>

Six Nations resident Denise Miller who is studying Indigenous studies and sustainable agriculture and food systems at Trent University started a summer program last year to reconnect youth to the environment. “I think that’s what our community is missing is more things to be more active and have outdoor activities,” Miller said. “That’s a huge part of why we’re struggling as youth in terms of mental health — we don’t have a lot of things that are geared toward being on the land.”

Miller realized that food was part of our identity, so her and her father, Rick Miller, put in a teaching garden. They believed that when you are on the land doing things, it can be a positive outlet and a healing experience for the youth. Rick Miller stated, “I think having the garden and being outside builds those conversations about who we are as people, not just to educate them, but to have interpersonal relationships.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Antone, R. (2013). *Yukwalihowanahthu yukwanosaunee tsiniyukwaliho:t^ As people of the Longhouse, we honor our way of life tekal^hsal^ tsiniyukwaliho:t^ praise our way of life* (Doctoral dissertation). State University of New York, Buffalo

<sup>20</sup> <https://news.umanitoba.ca/mohawk-scholar-believes-experiential-learning-provides-a-deeper-appreciation-for-the-land/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/six-nations-garden-project-miller-1.5745018>



## Original School Feasibility Study

Early in 2014, the Mohawk community of Akwesasne began a land-based and language-infused cultural apprenticeship program that gives learners the opportunity to apprentice with master knowledge-holders to learn traditional, land-based, cultural practices, including hunting and trapping, medicinal plants and healing, fishing and water use, and horticulture and black ash basket making.

Kahnawake scholar Gerald Taiiiake Alfred, Ph.D., was the principal consultant on a cultural apprenticeship program in the Mohawk community of Akwesasne that he describes as, “a land-based and language-infused cultural apprenticeship program that gives learners the opportunity to apprentice with master knowledge-holders to learn traditional, land-based, cultural practices, including hunting and trapping, medicinal plants and healing, fishing and water use, and horticulture and black ash basket making.” The program took ten years to research and develop a community consensus. The community had to come to the following realizations:

- Culture is a practice that promotes cultural continuity, self-sufficiency, and political independence.
- Culture as a practice has been damaged by colonization.
- Cultural harm is both economic and political harm.
- Mohawk cultural ways are not static, but continuously changing.

In response, Á:se tsi Tewá:ton, which means “make it new again” (Cultural Restoration Program), was designed to promote and support the regeneration of these practices:

- Water, fishing and use of the river, and language associated with each.
- Horticulture and basket-making, and sustainable practices.
- Medicine Plants and healing, regeneration of both habitat and intergenerational teachings, language and relationships.
- Hunting and Trapping, including livelihood, habitat restoration and intergenerational teachings, language and relationships.

The Akwesasne Cultural Restoration Program identified several goals that are consistent with the objectives of the Original School. Through the educational program they hoped for community enrichment in which:

- these cultural practices are spread among all age groups and throughout the family groups in the community
- the number of people doing land-based cultural activities is increasing at pace with overall population numbers
- the practices are diffuse within the social, political and economic life of Akwesasne
- the practices adapt to the changing culture of the community
- the situation is achieved where people again gain the level of expertise in these areas, that specialized knowledge and the skill level within the community actually begins to increase, and the practices evolve further.

## Original School Feasibility Study

Since the program is built from a traditional Mohawk perspective, it incorporates cultural and spiritual aspects that are unquestionably tied to the values and Onkwehon:we responsibility as caretakers of the land and waters. Alfred concluded that mentoring programs of master-apprentice relationships with elders was a great way to restore necessary connections, regenerate key cultural practices, and transfer crucial cultural knowledge, thereby ensuring long-term cultural integrity, social stability, and revitalized economic self-sufficiency and nationhood. Since his report, the areas of learning expanded to include a holistic approach, with Rotinonhsón:ni values that generate long term thinking, sustainability and leadership qualities.<sup>22</sup>

Environmental ethics are folded into the teachings so that students learn of the sacred relationships between themselves and the plants, waters, animals, birds and reptiles that share this land. They will be taught to have gratitude before harvesting, understand reciprocity by offering tobacco, picking selectively, always leaving something for others, and using a Good Mind so that good energy enhances what is harvested.

### 3.3.2 Artist-in-Me Pathway: Creative Arts and Heritage Promotion

#### Tsitewanonhsahniráthe Á:re - Restrengthening the House

Re-strengthening Our House is predicated upon share values of relationships, respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility. The teachers will explore, in their training, to implement the Original School philosophy in real ways in which these values will be apparent.

This pathway is designed for those interested in careers in the visual and performing arts, arts management, cultural resource management, and cultural tourism. Learners on this Artist-in-Me Pathway will gain orientation and skills in the creative fields of study, as well as a variety of skills to protect and enhance our cultural heritage (historic sites, history interpretation, museum studies, arts management, library and archives management, digital productions, travel & tourism, etc.) This is intended to provide exposure to new fields of study that address community-based needs of Six Nations and beyond. It draws upon a variety of disciplines that reflect opportunities for Indigenous expressions, interpretation and presentations.

Cultural tourism is on the rise and has been identified as a significant economic opportunity for Indigenous communities across Canada. Our community has a variety of cultural and heritage assets that need protection and expansion. When we think of the role of Chiefswood Park, Kayanase, Woodland Cultural Centre, Six Nations Council House, Mohawk Chapel, Kanata Village in the preservation of our knowledge and as heritage enterprises, there are many opportunities for our youth. In addition, the visual and performing arts have produced many world-class artists from Six Nations. Opportunities in the arts world are increasing.

This component is more than an art school, it is about artistic and heritage management. What do art and heritage need? Our youth can learn to become active participants in the Visual Arts, Performing Arts, Literary Arts, Art Of Storytelling, Digital Arts, Arts Administration, Historic Site Management, Exhibition Development, Public Relations, Commemorative Celebrations, Archaeology, Cultural Resource

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<sup>22</sup> Taiaiake Alfred, "The Akwesasne cultural restoration program: A Mohawk approach to land-based education," Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society, Vol. 3, No. 3, 2014, pp. 134-144

## Original School Feasibility Study

Management, Historic Preservation, Architectural Heritage, Arts Education, Traditional Arts, Publishing, Cultural Centre Management, Arts Organization Management, Audience Development, Library and Archives Management, and much more.

Working with professional partners the learners will have both theoretical and practical training in a variety of arts and heritage professions. In this way, we create a generation of skilled learners who take a larger stake in the cultural, historic, and artistic resources of our community.

The arts, within a broader context, offer a greater number of careers that one might think. As an example, this could include training and orientation to careers such as (Complete list is attached as Appendix II):

- Audio-Visual Technician
- Archaeologist: Excavates, researches and reports on artifacts.
- Archivist: Acquires, arranges and describes records of historical significance.
- Artistic director: Auditions and selects performers.
- Audio technician: Provides all audio requirements for exhibits. Lighting technician: Appropriately lights exhibitions
- Conservation landscape architect: Plans the treatment of an historic landscape or develops a landscape suitable for the site's history.
- Costume designer: Designs period costumes for exhibits.
- Curator: Acquires, researches and writes about artifacts and develops exhibits.
- Digital Art / Designer
- Exhibit designer: Conceives and designs the exhibit.
- Heritage researcher: Researches stories for exhibits.
- Historian: Provides the historical background for exhibits.
- Librarian / information specialist: Helps people search for information.
- Naturalist / botanist / biologist: Cares for the wildlife and plant life.
- Park Ranger: Oversees the operation of a park.
- Recording Engineer

The Artist-In-Me Pathway will also provide opportunities to study the arts while exploring other academic areas to supplement that work in areas including business, fundraising, writing, and web design. Potential Professional Partners/Service Organizations for this type of curriculum could include the following:

- |                                   |                                     |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ❖ Heritage Canada Foundation      | ❖ Niagara Parks Commission          |
| ❖ Libraries and Archives Canada   | ❖ Ontario Arts Council              |
| ❖ Canada Council of the Arts      | ❖ Cultural Human Resources Council  |
| ❖ Canadian Museums Association    | ❖ Woodland Cultural Centre          |
| ❖ Ontario Museum Association      | ❖ Chiefswood National Historic Site |
| ❖ Ontario Heritage Trust          | ❖ Mohawk Chapel                     |
| ❖ Parks Canada                    | ❖ Through the Red Door Productions  |
| ❖ The Heritage Canada Foundation  | ❖ Prince's Trust Canada             |
| ❖ Archaeological Associations     | ❖ Historica Canada                  |
| ❖ Canadian Conservation Institute |                                     |

## Original School Feasibility Study

The purpose of this component is to provide an education to addresses the real needs within our community in terms of employment and services that improve the quality of our lives. In this way, we create a generation of skilled learners who take a larger stake in the cultural, historic, and artistic resources of our community.

### 3.3.3 Builder-in-Me Pathway: Specialist High Skills & Trades School

Oh Nikanonhsò:ten lonkwanonhsón:ni - That Which is Being Built

The house built by our ancestors was a real and metaphorical structure which the Rotinonhsón:ni had built for themselves using the laws of the natural world, intertwined with the laws of using Ka'nikonhrí:io (a good mind). That structure grew and adapted organically with each generation, utilizing the laws, philosophies and pragmatic means of addressing concerns facing each generation, while also carefully considering how their decisions would impact future generations.

The Original School will be built upon the cultural premise that people sharing one space need to understand what they can do to keep peace in the house. In this way the Good Mind is not a topic to be learned, but a way in which the teachers, administrators, parents, community elders and secondary school learners engage with each other.

This pathway is designed for those interested in developing practical skills in trades and self-enrichment. Learners on this Builder-in-Me Pathway will gain orientation and skills in a variety of household, garden, construction, food service, and technical trades so they can better enrich their own lives or enter trades careers. This is intended to provide the equivalent education an experiences and expertise offered through the Advanced Skills program on the Province of Ontario. It draws upon the experiences of skills trades people within our community as well as experts from nearby colleges and trade schools. It includes Cooperative Education experiences to connect the learners to community opportunities.

In former times, parents had to be jacks-of-all trades and lived in association with other people who had special skills to manage the household, operate the family farm, or harvest from nature. An interesting collection of artifacts from Six Nations at the Canada Museum of History in Ottawa, collected from 1910-1920, reveal the range of skills that our ancestors needed to provide for their families. Notes collected by Frederick Waugh also documented the skills of house building, native dyes, cooking, hunting, fishing and so forth. In summary, our ancestors were better equipped to be sufficient communities. At the same time, no one could do it all, so people specialized and then traded abilities so that all could benefit from community-held knowledge and experiences.

One strategy is to have students find a practical application of Indigenous thought by constructing a learning lodge of natural materials, much like their ancestor had done. This teaches about architecture and the function of space. It also creates an outdoor learning space for the other pathways. By building such a teaching lodge, the Builder-in-Me students contribute to the overall campus culture and learn about what their imagination and hands, combined with traditional knowledge, can produce.

This Professional Pathways component is a hands-on mentoring component in technical arts and skills. It would collaborate and be parallel with the Province of Ontario's Specialist High Skills Majors (SHSM). Working with skilled tradespeople within the community, this component will develop intensive training strategies that met or exceed the SHSM ministry-approved program that allows students to focus their learning on a specific economic sector while meeting the requirements of the Ontario Secondary School

## Original School Feasibility Study

Diploma (OSSD). SHSMs assist students in planning their transition from secondary school to apprenticeship training, college, university, or the workplace. These programs enable students to gain sector-specific skills and knowledge in engaging, career-related learning environments, and to prepare in a focused way for graduation and postsecondary education, training, or employment.

Many courses of study have already been developed and tested by the Province of Ontario that would need minor adjustment to make them more culturally relevant. We might also want to study how Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP) works in placing grade 11 or 12 students in apprenticeships to become certified journeypersons. Working with industry leaders, and local employment and training agencies, we can develop this component is to provide a secondary education that can lead to direct employable skills, and helps the learners become more self-reliant on the practical skills to build a fully functional community.

The construction trades have practical application in building the infrastructure of our community. Several of our communities have cooperative house building initiatives, in which local skilled craftspeople and artisans work together to help new families build their first homes. All of the trades are needed in such ventures and it returns us to the social nature of our society. If students experience this type of shared talent and labor experiences while at the Original School, they will carry those values into their future lives, no matter what profession they enter.

Ontario First Nations Technical Services Corporation (OFNTSC) of Brantford has launched an initiative to provide more Indigenous youth with the training to succeed in roles that require the skill of technical self-reliance. Their focus is grades 7-12 First Nations students throughout Ontario for a new mentorship program, which is specifically geared towards helping youth pursue science, technology, engineering and math careers (STEM). A chief goal of the program is to “address the current lack of in-house technical staff that many First Nations face.”

“Our focus for launch of this new mentorship program is on promoting careers for youth in the areas of water/wastewater, solid waste, environment, trades, housing, architecture, engineering and any other technical area that First Nations need,” said Melanie Debassige, executive director of the OFNTSC. <sup>23</sup>

This mentorship program, which is spawned from the Technical Youth Career Outreach Project the OFNTSC established in 2003, is just beginning but it represents the kind of cooperative programming we need at the Original School.

Students could receive the SHSM seal on their diploma when they:

- Complete a specific bundle of 8-10 courses in the student's selected field;
- Earn valuable industry certifications including first aid and CPR qualifications; and
- Gain important skills on the job through cooperative education placements.

It is intended for Grade 11 and 12 students who are:

- Heading for apprenticeship training, college, university or the workplace; and

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<sup>23</sup> “New First Nations youth mentoring program focuses on technical careers,” Ontario First Nations Technical Services Corporation, <https://www.ofntsc.org/news/new-first-nations-youth-mentorship-program-focuses-technical-careers>

## Original School Feasibility Study

- Wanting to identify, explore, and refine their career goals and make informed choices about their next steps after secondary school.

Pursuing a Specialist High Skills Major enables students to:

1. Customize their secondary school education to suit their interests and talents;
2. Develop specialized knowledge and skills that are valued by the sector and postsecondary education institutions;
3. Earn credits that are recognized by the sector and postsecondary education institutions;
4. Gain sector-specific and career-relevant certification and training;
5. Engage in sector-partnered experiences that are relevant to the sector;
6. Identify, explore, and refine their career goals and make informed decisions about their postsecondary destination;
7. Remain flexible, with the option to shift between pathways should their goals and plans change.

Currently, the province has certified courses in the following sectors, from which we can choose those that are most appropriate:

- Agriculture
- Arts and Culture
- Aviation and Aerospace
- Business
- Construction
- Energy
- Environment
- Food Processing
- Forestry
- Health and Wellness
- Horticulture and Landscaping
- Hospitality and Tourism
- Information and Communications Technology
- Justice, Community Safety, and Emergency Services
- Manufacturing
- Non-profit Management
- Sports Management and Promotion
- Transportation

We would need a larger discussion on what specific course the Original School could offer. The above list are possible areas to pursue. We might start with a limited number and slowly grow by adding more topics as the community sees fit.

We might also want to study how Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP) works in placing grade 11 or 12 students in apprenticeships to become certified journeypersons. Working with industry leaders, and local employment and training agencies, we can develop this component to provide a secondary education that can lead to direct employable skills, and helps the learners become more self-reliant on the practical skills to build a fully functional community. It springs off the character building and cultural fluency that the Original School offers so that our learners have more self-confidence to seek a way of living that is more in line with their inherent gifts and abilities.

### 3.3.4 Multi-Tasker-in-Me Pathway – Interdisciplinary Skills Enrichment

Né: tsi nihá:ti à:se tehatikonhsatóntie – For those whose faces are yet to come

There is a teaching that everyone comes to this world carrying a special gift of ability that needs to be nurtured along their journey. Some can sing really good. Some can dance. Some are good hunters. Some

## Original School Feasibility Study

can make beautiful baskets. There is a whole variety of possibilities. This pathway gives the learner ample opportunities to discover what gift they carry while exploring a variety of subjects and possible directions.

This pathway is designed to provide an interdisciplinary experience so that the learner could sample parts of the other four pathways. Learners on this Multi-Tasker-in-Me Pathway will gain orientation and skills in a wide variety of disciplines, drawing upon the strengths and experiences of the other learning styles. This is intended to provide more options for life-long learning. It draws upon a wide variety of skills and experiences within and surrounding our community with a focus on building the whole person (mentally, physically, socially, and spiritually).

Grade Nine will be a core experience with a sampling of introductory courses to each of the pathways. In addition, learners will take common courses in Health & Physical Education, Communication/English Skills, Rotinonhsón:ni languages, Computer skills, Mathematic Skills, Rotinonhsón:ni History, Indigenous studies, World Studies, Science, and Social Sciences and Humanities. There needs to be a further discussion about offering French or other languages.

### 3.4 New Teaching Strategy: Staying Student Centred

The Original School defines holistic to include five aspects of our being:

- Mental – Our Mind and Intellect
- Physical – Our Fitness and Wellbeing
- Emotional – Our Feelings and Sense of Self
- Spiritual – Our Connection to Creation
- Social-Relational – Our Relationships

#### **Mental – Preparing the Good Mind for Making Healthy Choices**

The Original School will help students gain a sense of personal and civic responsibility; use reason to employ a variety of problem-solving techniques; and develop their cognitive skills, cultural-based skills, and their innate gifts.

#### **Physical – Activities and Nutrition for Fitness and Wellness**

The Original School will help students develop physical fitness and personal wellness through outdoor activities, recreation, and healthy eating to retain mental alertness.

#### **Emotional – Techniques to Dismantle Historical Traumas and Relive Mental Stress**

The Original School will help students in need to understand and deal with historical traumas through the utilization of cultural practices to restore the Good Mind as a state of emotional balance; develop a better sense of self-worth and compassion for others.

#### **Spiritual – Collaborating with the Sacred Web of Life**

Relationships with Creation expressed respectfully. Students engage in human rights and social justice movements that reflect the integrity of all beings and are consistent with their distinct cultural beliefs.

#### **Social/Relational - Well-Being in Relationships**

## Original School Feasibility Study

Adding to the usual four direction matrix, we have included social relationships as another aspect of Holistic health. To end anti-social behaviors and bullying, we have to help all students improve the quality of their relationships. Creating, nurturing and enjoying healthy relationships is an important aspect of being Rotinonhsón:ni.

### 3.5 Genuine Knowledge for Developing Onkwehon:we Personalities

“Our highest endeavor must be to develop free human beings who are able of themselves to impart purpose and direction to their lives. The need for imagination, a sense of truth, and a feeling of responsibility; these are the very nerve of education.”

Rudolf Steiner, founder of the Waldorf School Philosophy <sup>24</sup>

The Waldorf School movement is based upon an educational philosophy that humanity has the wisdom to transform itself and the world, through one’s own spiritual development. To that end, Waldorf education holds as its primary intention the ideal of bringing forth—in every child—his or her unique potential in a way that serves the further development of humanity. The curriculum, pedagogy, and teaching methods are designed to nurture this potential. <sup>25</sup>

Music, dance and theater, writing, literature, legends and myths are not simply subjects to be read about and tested. They are experienced. Through these experiences, Waldorf students cultivate their intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual capacities to be individuals certain of their paths and to be of service to the world.

The Association of Waldorf Schools conducted a survey of recent graduates of their schools to identify the qualities and skills they gained:

- Multiple Intelligences and Cross Disciplinary Learners
- Global Consciousness and Sustainability
- Basis for Moral Navigation
- Creative Problem Solving
- High Levels of Social Intelligence
- Environmental Stewardship
- High Levels of Emotional Intelligence
- Thinkers Who Think Outside the Box

The responses of more than 1000 alumni who graduated between 1999 and 2017 from some 40 Waldorf high schools spread across North America are telling about the impact of their educational philosophy. The graduates noted that their education prepared them to:

- Be open minded
- Be creative and innovative
- Empathize with others
- Think of the whole picture

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<sup>24</sup> Bartges, C., ed, *Educating as an Art: Essays on Waldorf Education*, The Rudolf Steiner School, 1979

<sup>25</sup> Waldorf Education, <https://www.waldorfeducation.org/waldorf-education/faqs-about-waldorf>



## Original School Feasibility Study

- Take leadership roles
- Develop a meaningful perspective on life.<sup>26</sup>

92% of these students completed their first college degree. Graduates noted that their educational experiences have influenced their own parenting. Post-secondary professors noted that Waldorf graduates have the ability to integrate thinking; to assimilate information as opposed to memorizing isolated facts; to be flexible, creative and willing to take intellectual risks; and are leaders with high ethical and moral standards who take initiative and are passionate to reach their goals.

Through this study, we have sought a Rotinonhsón:ni equivalent to the Waldorf education philosophy. Skaronhyasehkó:wa Tsohterakenra'kó:wa Tsi Iontaweia'táhkwa - The Everlasting Tree School has been inspired by Waldorf educational philosophy, combined with a Mohawk immersion strategy for a primary school experience. Founded in 2010 by a group of teachers and parents who were looking for a more holistic education for their children, Skaronhyase'kó:wa brings outdoor education, experiential learning and language immersion in new ways.

The Original School focuses on traditional values and customary practices; however, it will not force any beliefs upon anyone. The core teachings of the Thanksgiving Address (express gratitude), the story of the Peacemaker (understanding peacebuilding), to planting and cultivation of food crops (restore healthy nutrition), the gathering from nature for food and medicine (self-reliance), learning of Indigenous history are important facets of identity formation and character building. The style of sharing will not focus on the victimization of our ancestors. Rather, the Original School will help the learners understand how the ancestors were resilient and how they applied their Indigenous knowledge to move forward despite the adversity. In this way we look to the past to help shape a constructive future.

We had to look at the past practices. In former longhouse village days, our youth learned by example. Everyone was working for the sake of the community. Everyone was fed. Everyone received medicine for their wellness. Everyone had responsibilities. Everyone continued their talents to make the society self-reliant and self-sufficient. To recover that kind of society, education is necessary. However, a new mindset is needed. Teachers need passion for their subject matter, acting as mentors instead of teaching to the standardized test.

Teachers will build capacities for self-reflection, using our treasury of stories and oral histories to analyze and evaluate the matters presented. The use of open-ended questions is necessary, in which the dialogue on points of view connections and collaboration can be achieved. The Original School will provide, just like the old villages, various ways of learning. Flexibility is the use of interior and external spaces is key. Classroom spaces must provide for individual work/thinking, group interactions, and collaborations. Both introverts and extroverts must find spaces conducive to their style of learning. Teachers have to pay attention to learner needs and provide the best, engaged and inspired way to foster a love for learning in all.

In terms of teaching history, the Original School will help the learners see history through their ancestors' eyes, relying on oral history, story, and wampum belts to reveal the thinking of their ancestors as they responded to an ever-changing world of colonization. In these historical events can be seen and

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<sup>26</sup> Gerwin, D., *Haw Waldorf Alumni Fare After Graduating from High School*, Research Bulletin, Fall/Winter, Vol. 24, No. 2, 2019

## Original School Feasibility Study

understood through a critical pedagogy that enables learners to question and challenge domination, and the beliefs and practices that dominate in order to achieve critical consciousness.

Outdoor education allows learners to experience the values embedded in nature – the woods, fields, forest and streams. Combined with traditional stories and lifeways skills, they can reimagine a connection to place that can shape their future lives.

### 3.6 Original School Code of Ethics

Every school needs a code of ethics that represents the values they stand for and the character qualities that they aspire to in the graduates. We suggest that the Code of Ethics for the Original School be as follows:

- I am a responsible person.
- I choose my actions, attitudes, moods and behaviors.
- I do the right thing without being asked, even when no one is looking.
- I do things that have meaning and make a difference.
- I look for ways to be a good citizen of my community.
- I spend time on things that are the most important.

### 3.7 Our Commitment to Onkwehonwehnéha: Role of Culture and Language

“When we lost our language we lost our very identity – the togetherness, the laughter, the happiness, the spirituality, the giving, the healing. But when we start talking, we’ll find all of this again and it will start from the inside out, the good feeling, the happiness, the humour, the enjoyment of once again knowing who we are. Kenhwenhnonken (1926-2008) <sup>27</sup>

Our community has made a commitment to increase heritage language fluency at Six Nations of the Grand River Territory. Community member and principal of Kaweniiio Private School, Jeremy Green completed a study on implementing educational pathways for Onkwehonwehnéha speakers. Green noted that there are five stages to becoming a speaker (Beginner, novice, intermediate, advanced and superior/distinguished).

The most efficient pathways, according to his study, is adult immersion (81.5% effective). The second most effective program was the Master-Apprentice Program at 63% effective. Third most effective was elementary immersion programs at 62.4%. Least effective were on-line courses (22.3%) and elementary NSL courses (25.2%). Unfortunately, no secondary school language programs were part of this study.

Green noted that 6 out of 8 elementary schools in the community use the Ontario Native Languages Curriculum to measure oral communication, reading & writing in Native Second Language programs. Only one immersion school used a modified American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Oral Proficiency Interview, geared to children and in Onkwehonwehnéha, to determine learner speaking proficiency from grades 1-3 from 2010-2013. In those assessments, only 2 students were rated at Intermediate High; 2 Advanced; and one Novice High. Unfortunately, according to Green, the school stopped measuring language acquisition achievement.

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<sup>27</sup> Deer, F., Falkenberg, T., eds. Indigenous Perspectives on Education for Well-Being in Canada, ESWB Press, 2016

## Original School Feasibility Study

According to the stages of becoming a speaker, it would appear that our target goal would be to have a successful graduate of the Original School achieve a novice stage (Building the Base). It might be possible that the more advanced learners could achieve the intermediate level, however, that would require a significant involvement of fluent speakers in the day-to-day experiences at the Original School.

Jeremy had a second realization that impacts on our proposal. “I realized that teaching Mohawk is about much more than simply teaching morphemes, words, sentences, syntax, grammar or semantics,” wrote Green. “Teaching and learning Mohawk also requires teaching about who Mohawk people are - both past and present. It requires teaching about the dynamic culture of Mohawk people today.”

Green realized that what was missing is pragmatics – a linguistic concept by which context contributes to meaning. For us, there is a different kind of pragmatics, but with parallel thinking. How can we educate secondary students in such a way that the heritage languages become the natural way in which to express their feeling, to communicate with each other, to foster creativity and joint interaction in facing the future?

Currently Level 1-3 Mohawk is offered at Brantford Collegiate Institute and Pauline Johnson, serving a total of 39 students; Level 1 and Cayuga offered at McKinnon serving 33 students. In 2018-19, a new initiative was launched to provide additional support to those students who have been in an Indigenous language immersion program at any time during their elementary school years. Students transferring from language immersion schools often lack comparable English and math skills. However, Green discovered that these types of programs do not produce a significant level of fluency.

Jeremy Green learned a valuable lesson when he was teaching in adult immersion. He recited a phrase from a ceremonial speech of encouragement to the immersion students but they could not understand it, no matter how he tried to explain it to them in the Mohawk language. Then came the enlightenment: “What I realized is that the language and practices that I had been tasked with to teach the students was way over their heads both linguistically and culturally. It was absolutely outside of the realm of their lifestyles and experience. I asked myself honest questions: “Who are my students? What do they talk about? What interests and motivates them? What do they want to learn how to talk about and how do they want to learn it?”

This is an important lesson for all of us. We have to meet the students where they are, intellectually, socially, cultural, and linguistically. It is difficult to expect a 9th or 10th grader to think about their long-term prospects for employment. Some follow family tradition. Some seek a new avenue to taking care of themselves. Most have no idea of what it takes to build a career, nor what different occupations would require of them.

More thought would need to be put into this matter to determine the actual scope and range of learning and using Onkwehonwehnéha at the Original School, recalling what Jeremy Green said: “Language revitalization must not be placed in opposition to various value systems be they traditional or otherwise; but must be broad enough to allow living within a variety of value systems within a context where the language is relevant and useful to all.”

### 3.8 Our Land-Based Pedagogy

“One of the things that is important in land-based education is physical health. We experience a lot of issues with health, and I’ve learned if we’re not being physically active while we’re learning, we have lost

## Original School Feasibility Study

a big portion of what it means to learn from the land. . . Land-based learning ties us back to our culture and the land and the places we come from or come to, and if you get the opportunity to do these things, take them up! If you're rural, take them up with Elders and help create programs in your communities by taking your community's lead."

Brian Rice. Ph.D. author of *The Rotinonshonni: A Traditional Iroquoian History Through the Eyes of Teharonhia:wako and Sawiskera*.<sup>28</sup>

Place-Based Thought, as advocated by local scholar Vanessa Watts, Ph.D., is based upon a belief that the land is as alive as humans, and that both humans and non-humans derive their agency from the land. Agency, according to Watts, is the ability to uniquely perceive the world and make independent choices, is often viewed as a gift or privilege only bestowed upon humans - beings who breathe, live, think, perceive, reason, and so on.<sup>29</sup>

Connection to the land is an important part of physical, mental, social, and spiritual wellness. Indigenous communities are already experiencing the effects of the climate crisis, and will increasingly, and disproportionately, be affected by such changes in the future. Severe weather, changing temperatures, increased garbage and algae in bodies of water, already-high costs of living, and existing colonial settlements and resource-development projects all affect the land, and subsequently, the connection that Indigenous peoples have to the land. We can rebuild our connection to the land, which in turn strengthens personal identity, and ultimately, a more meaningful existence and active participation in community.

A key to this kind of education is land-based, experiential learning. That simply means that students will learn by doing while engaging in activities on the land, much like their ancestors. Students learn through keen observation, active listening, and mentored participation. Through this process, the learner reflects more on the meaning of what they are learning and finds new ways to put those life lessons into action. As a result, the learner takes more responsibility of their learning. It becomes more memorable to them.

The Mother Earth is our first teacher, and by reconnecting our youth with the regenerative powers of nature, they can preserve their heritage and bring new strategies and techniques to explore further prospects for Six Nations as a self-sustaining community. Therefore, Rotinonhsón:ni worldview connects our thought and our being into one. We are deeply connected to the place of our ancestors, defined by that connection, and our future is tied to how well we maintain that connection to place. Our identity is tied to place. From a Confederacy point of view:

- Senecas are People of the Great Mountain, a reference to Bare Hill near Canandaigua Lake.
- Cayugas are People of the Great Swamp, a reference to the Montezuma Swamp near Cayuga Lake.
- Onondaga are People of the Hills, a reference to the rolling hills of Central New York.
- Oneidas are People of the Standing Stone, a reference to a sacred rock that marked their ancestral villages.

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<sup>28</sup> <https://news.umanitoba.ca/mohawk-scholar-believes-experiential-learning-provides-a-deeper-appreciation-for-the-land/>

<sup>29</sup> Watts, V. (2013). Indigenous Place-Thought and Agency Amongst Humans and Non Humans (First Woman and Sky Woman Go On a European World Tour!). *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 2(1), 20-34. Retrieved from <http://decolonization.org/index.php/des/article/view/19145>

## Original School Feasibility Study

- Mohawks are People of the Flint, a reference to the flint/chert that was abundant in the homelands in the Mohawk Valley.
- Tuscarora are People of the Hemp, a reference to the abundance of dogbane in their homelands that was used to make their clothing.

There is no one recipe for success. The advantage of this style of education is that there are many ways in which it can be effectively implemented. It is a holistic approach to student learning. It can include classroom experiences, field experiences, field placements, internships, co-operative education, community projects, lab, crafts, medicine walks, gardening, cooking, service learning, and practicums and Capstone projects. Learning takes place in cooperation with the rhythms of everyday life including activities such as hunting and gathering, planting and cultivation, collecting maple sap, and other such traditional activities.

“We used the river and the land for our livelihood, because we fished and whatever fish we didn’t eat, other people ate. And we did a lot of our own gardens and ate whatever we produced. We used to live off the land before. We had no welfare back then, we had to live off the land. In my elders’ time, everybody fished and gardened, the whole village, and a lot of people came and bought stuff from us. After that, everything changed.” Akwesasne Elder, n.d.<sup>30</sup>

There is a theory regarding nature-deficit now suffered by many children. Because of the increased use of technology, children are less connected to outdoors. Scientific evidence shows that the nature-deficit disorder contributes to a diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties, conditions of obesity, and higher rates of emotional and physical illnesses. Research suggests that the nature-deficit weakens ecological literacy and stewardship of the natural world. These problems are linked more broadly to what has been called the “epidemic of inactivity.” Our traditions teach us that this connection to nature is vital to our identity, expressions of gratitude and our sense of spiritual completeness. We must act so as not to lose this valuable connection. The recovery of Rotinonhsón:ni intellectual and cultural knowledge is a critical step.

Our learners will gain understanding of how nature works by being on the land, exploring our connection to place. They will gain an appreciation for what the land can teach us, and how our culture enhances our relationship to the land. There are both physical and spiritual connections to the land.

Our physical connection is best demonstrated by learning how our ancestors survived prior to colonization, and used the physical resources of nature to build shelters and longhouses, as well as the household tools and utensils needed to harvest foods, clothing and transportation. Outdoor education offers opportunities to learn more about plant and animal species, their habitats and how our ancestors engaged with both.

Outdoor education also provides more opportunities to understand the belief system of the ancestors, and to gain a deeper appreciation for what the land provides. This gives deeper meaning to the tradition of gratitude. The Earth is alive with spirit and plants, trees, birds, animals, and reptiles also have a spiritual essence that is explained through story and confirmed by observation.

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<sup>30</sup> Alfred, T., “The Akwesasne cultural Restoration program: A Mohawk approach to land-based learning,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, Vol. 3, No. 3, 2014.

## Original School Feasibility Study

Traditional stories will transfer knowledge from those who lived their lives on the land with those who are reconnecting to the land. Teachers must become effective storytellers, drawing upon our great oral history traditions.

Our tradition is a great repository of knowledge. We have our Creation Story, oral history, historical narratives, ceremonies, songs, the Great Law of Peace, experiences in Treaty-making, and countless personal stories of facing life's difficulties. This volume of information includes values, beliefs, ethics, morals, and philosophies that can be an advantage for our youth to discover and reflect upon. This valuable resource offers us keys to understanding and implementing healthy identities, empowering relationships, coping mechanisms, creative problem-solving, sustainability strategies, community development, and personal resilience.

Here is how Rotinonhsón:ni-led, land-based education addresses and shapes this pedagogy:

- Increases understanding of the history of the land, and the importance of the land by connecting youth with Elders who can pass on this knowledge.
- Provides opportunity for youth to develop their own connection with the land, which in turn nourishes them spiritually, physically, and mentally.
- Teaches youth how to be good stewards of the land (how to hunt, fish, trap, and monitor the lands, waters, and species).
- Teaches youth about the importance of protecting the land and treating it with respect as their Ancestors did before them.
- Empowers youth to fight for their rights, including their rights to protect their own land.
- Provides awareness of jobs, educational programs, and funding opportunities in the areas of conservation and environmentalism.
- Empowers youth to share their knowledge about the land with others, which will increase awareness and understanding.

Therefore, Rotinonhsón:ni-led, land-based education:

- Provides a safe place which nurtures mental, physical, and spiritual wellness in which to practice and revitalize traditional ceremonies, languages, stories, and more.
- Brings together Elders and young people to pass on knowledge and teachings.
- Uses culturally relevant methods for teaching courses that met or surpass provincially-accredited courses such as Math, Art, History, and Science.
- Rotinonhsón:ni-led means Rotinonhsón:ni educators, including Elders and Knowledge Keepers. This ensures authenticity and the opportunity to teach in traditional languages.
- Rotinonhsón:ni-led also means that educators have a stronger awareness of intergenerational issues and other barriers to learning that are unique to, or disproportionately affect, our youth. An empathetic approach to teaching means greater student retention.
- Addresses the need for culturally relevant education for youth.
- Provides opportunity for intergenerational transfer of knowledge from Elders (and Survivors) to youth.
- Provides a safe space for healing and for learning for Survivors, where they can bond with other.
- Survivors and youth, and build resilience as a community.
- Helps to revitalize endangered language and strengthens culture

## Original School Feasibility Study

- Teaches youth about the history of the Mohawk Institute and the Settlement Agreement, as well as about their rights.
- Empowers young people to develop their own connection to the land, to protect their land, and to fight for their rights.

Land-based learning typically uses an Indigenized and environmentally-focused approach to education by first recognizing the deep, physical, mental, and holistic connections to the land that constitutes an important aspect of Indigenous cultures. Research shows that learning in an outdoor environment has mental health benefits, improves understanding for active learners, and can help students to develop environmental awareness and a connection to the land. This can include teaching about ceremonies, traditional medicines, the history of the land, how to be good stewards of the land, and how to speak traditional languages, among other activities.

Students learn respect for Mother Earth and all of the things that are mentioned in the Thanksgiving Address in practical, hands-on, experiential ways. Students gain confidence in the abilities to sustain themselves, master traditional crafts, and learn the practical application of Rotinonhsón:ni knowledge.

Land-based Learning challenges students and teachers to reach beyond the normal ways of learning. Teachers must work with Elders to understand how curriculum may be taught on the land, through a series of camps and land-based activities. Through authentic land-based learning, they gain a significant understanding of themselves as Rotinonhsón:ni. Land-based Learning programs have proven to contribute to successful school completion for students who otherwise would very likely not finish high school. It is expensive but well worth the investment.

Land-based education fosters relationship building, teamwork, cultural awareness of the land. It also includes a Rotinonhsón:ni science system by which learners can experience scientific principles through a cultural lens. In this way the learners can also explore current topics like the impact of climate change, species and habitat loss, fish advisories, drinking water, waste management, and much more.

A land-based teaching philosophy can reconnect our youth to that ancestral knowledge. It will not be learning about what used to be, but workshopping ways to live that knowledge in a modern way. Each cohort of students can explore how ancient knowledge can be the path to a modern way of life. Our students will take ownership for that knowledge through proven land-based learning strategies and practices.

Nature is a great classroom for our youth. It demonstrates the validity of the Thanksgiving Address. It provides a natural learning laboratory for science, medicine, geography, botany, and ecology. What will make our new schoolhouse different from other schools is the presence of the land in our curriculum and teaching strategies.

The Earth is our Mother, according to our tradition. She is a provider. She is also a teacher. By reconnecting our youth to the land, they can reaffirm their connection to the clay from which the Onkwehón:we were first created, and to their responsibility to protect their homeland.

This approach could help us achieve the following:

- Provide dynamic holistic experiences in three seasons: autumn, winter and spring. A summer program could also be developed so that the learning opportunities continue.

## Original School Feasibility Study

- Offers travel experiences in a natural setting for grades 9 to 12 students to harvest foods from the local environment.
- Extend classroom inquiry learning within a variety of subject areas into hands-on learning
- Connect students and teachers to the land in meaningful ways from Indigenous and Western perspectives.
- Create a practical application of Teaching by Doing.

Land-based learning typically uses an Indigenized and environmentally-focused approach to education by first recognizing the deep, physical, mental, and holistic connections to the land that constitutes an important aspect of Indigenous cultures. Research shows that learning in an outdoor environment has mental health benefits, improves understanding for active learners, and can help students to develop environmental awareness and a connection to the land.

By learning how to build structures, harvest from nature, cultivate wholesome foods, make a variety of household crafts, the students will also learn the traditional stories that explain the world and reveal the skills necessary to live well. The goal of this component is to strengthen the sense of self, become more self-reliant, learn to work cooperatively, and reconnect with ancestral wisdom. Language learning is an important part of this component as well. In the end, the students will have important skills that will be of benefit no matter where their future path leads them.

### 3.8.1 Akwesasne Model

Outdoor education builds the sensory skills – keen observation and active listening – to learn how to move with the land with respect and love. Some land-based practices include growing & harvesting the Sustainers (Food Crops), hunting, fishing and gathering traditional plant medicines. It also includes making tools and instruments from natural materials.

Decolonization and the creation of Indigenous spaces cannot continue if generations of young people are not educated and/or connected to the land as community-based intellectuals are necessary for the regeneration efforts within Western academic or industrial systems (Alfred, 1999; 2005). The primary concern in fostering a connection to the land and “educating” young people is to nurture a new generation of Elders and knowledge keepers committed to living out culturally inherent meanings of being Indigenous within thought systems (Alfred, 1999; 2005).

*Fishing and River Use:* The apprentices will learn past and present fishing techniques, methods and equipment; boating maintenance, equipment and safety; river and water system; biology of water species and habitats; cleaning, smoking and preparing fish; first aid and personal flotation devices; and environmental issues related to contamination of the waters, species and plant life. All efforts will ensure that Apprentices are taught to respect the waters and carry out activities that acknowledge Onkwehonwe (first people/Indigenous) values and beliefs in a sustainable and healthy way for future generations.

*Hunting and Trapping:* The apprentices will learn solid hunting and trapping skills; knowledge about the animal, behaviors and their habitats; tools and equipment required to effectively establish sustainable hunting and trapping practices; and developing a physical, emotional, and spiritual relationship with the animals through songs, ceremony, and practice. This approach includes intergenerational transfer of knowledge by working with elders to create and enhance the learning process through language, stories,



## Original School Feasibility Study

history, recipes, and shared techniques. The goal is to restore hunting and trapping practices for future use, protection and sustainability of traditional food sources for future generations.

*Horticulture and Traditional Foods:* The apprentices will learn of Rotinohsón:ni horticulture; traditional and contemporary growing, harvesting and food preparation/preservation techniques; develop an appreciation of the Three Sisters (corn, beans, squash) sustainable practices that include seed saving, soil maintenance, composting, crop rotations, worm casting, and good practices for safely handling and distributing fresh produce. Teachings also include foraging and preparing wild foods found in different local environments (i.e. rivers, shoreline, wetlands and forests) of Akwesasne. The goal is to integrate Onkwehonwe Creation Story, ceremony, language, songs and prayers into the practice of cultivating a sustainable relationship with the earth that promotes individual, family and community health.

*Traditional Medicines and Healing:* Apprentices will learn how to identify, harvest and properly store medicines; and re-establish endangered plants. This approach will utilize traditional cultural methods combined with botany, biology, human anatomy and physiology in a manner that acknowledges the natural human relationships that promote and uphold respect, reciprocity and healing. This methodology is based upon the belief that everyone and everything on earth is interconnected and every person, animal and plant has a spirit or essence that contributes to healing. The goal of this program is to cultivate medicinal healers within the community; ensure the survival of medicinal knowledge for future use and protection and sustainability of medicinal plants for future generations.

### 3.9 Nutrition and Learning

“Food Sovereignty to me is being in control of self and body around food. That includes access to knowledge and foods that support a healthy lifestyle. Freedom of choice is not enough. It includes support while in recovery from food related trauma and trauma that is being played out through food.”

Chandra Maracle, Tyendinaga Mohawk, Ph.D. candidate, 2020 <sup>31</sup>

We were given spirit foods to empower our mind, body and spirit; and we were given medicines to protect us, and restore us to healthiness; we were instructed that our thoughts have power so we must keep a positive frame of mind in order for our thinking to be healthy. If our minds create electrical impulses to communicate how our bodies should function, then any disruption to those lines of communication and the power of those signals can lead to our unhealthiness. Poor nutrition can harm our mind’s ability to think well. Depression, grief and trauma also hinder our ability to think well.

“I love the corn because it represents accumulated knowledge passed down from farmer to farmer over the millennium. I love corn because it provides sustenance to my family and community today. I love corn because it represents our promise and commitment to the future. The simple act of planting corn connects me to the past, roots me in the present and commits me to the future,” stated Jane Mt. Pleasant, director of the Cornell University’s American Indian Program, in 1986. “I believe that without corn we will not survive. And corn will not survive without our love. When we love, we act. To be a protector, you must first find, recognize and honor love in your life.”

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<sup>31</sup> Maracle, Chandra, My Perspective on Food Sovereignty, <https://earthtotables.org/collaborators/chandra-maracle/>

## Original School Feasibility Study

The Healthy Roots experiment (2012-16) with a 90-day eating challenge in our community proved that healthy eating impacted directly on physical, mental and emotional health. Combined with at least 30 minutes of physical activity, produced an array of benefits: having better blood sugar control; taking less medications for diabetes and cholesterol; losing weight; sleeping better; being more productive at work; limiting digestive distress after meals; learning more about our traditional foods; gaining strength; preventing diabetes from worsening or decreasing diabetes complication risks; and feeling better.<sup>32</sup> Some participants also spoke of improved emotional and spiritual well-being.

An important part of our concept is to reconnect our youth to the power of Rotinonhsón:ni foods. This will be an essential part of their health studies, augmented by the daily serving of nutritious foods drawn from an ancestral eating plan. We will have to take the extraordinary steps to keep industrialized foods out of the Original School. This will be possible because one of the pathways we propose – The Sustainer-in-Me – will learn about food systems in maintaining food crops, harvesting food from nature, and techniques for ensuring food security. Students can also learn culinary skills to prepare heritage foods and experiment with traditional ingredients to create new menus. By engaging students in the food system of the school, they will also become more appreciative for where their food comes from, and how better to handle their waste. The Healthy Roots program also witnessed growth of relationships on many levels; individuals to their food, to each other and to the larger community as a whole. However, they also learned that unless the access to heritage foods is regularized, and personal support is sustained, most participants fell back on old eating habits.

The Original School will not only restore healthier, Indigenous foods on a daily basis, it will help the students become more engaged in Indigenous food systems, to reconnect with their ancestral foods. Learners will also participate in learning and practice healthy behaviors. Each lesson provides students the opportunity to practice skills, receive encouragement, and establish social support that in turn, increases self-efficacy and self-regulation. By restructuring the way learners think about and engage with food, can bring about constructive changes. Being healthy and eating well are expressions of Rotinonhsón:ni values.

“[Our ancestors were] motivated to watch and see which foods help the most. . . which foods have the best biological impact, especially on young people,” wrote John Mohawk, “Here’s a society that would rightly consider the idea that food is a medicine . . . Essentially they had to be very strategic about how they are going to spend their time and energy getting food. . . When the society was responsible for its own health, you had to say that they were very careful what it was they gave you. . . The food value in commercial food is weighed in dollars, and the food value in heritage foods is weighed in something we might call life force.”<sup>33</sup>

Recent studies have shown that what we eat, how we move about and the nature of our daily interactions with nature can support brain health, mental function and our ability to learn. The Good Mind results from a well-nourished mind that desires constructive relationships with others.

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<sup>32</sup> Kelly Gordon, Adrienne Lickers Xavier, Hannah Tait Neufeld, Healthy Roots: Building capacity through shared stories rooted in Haudenosaunee knowledge to promote Indigenous foodways and well-being, Canadian Food Studies, Vol. 5 No. 2, pp. 180–195, May 2018

<sup>33</sup> Mohawk, J., From the First to the Last Bite: Learning from the Food Knowledge of Our Ancestors, <https://www.scribd.com/document/340471203/John-Mohawk-From-the-First-to-Last-Bite>

## Original School Feasibility Study

A 2010 report by the National Research Council of Canada discussed the need for culturally appropriate networks and ICT for indigenous people. The report recognized that English, being the prevalent language used on the Internet, could fuel the disappearance of indigenous languages. Currently, questions are being raised around the world about the aggressive spread of misinformation and inappropriate data to youth, promoting such negative behaviours as body mutilation, suicide and drug use.

“The reality is that the pre-1491 Indians were living in a world in which two things were the case. Number one is that nobody was whispering in their ear telling them what to do, and number two was they lived communally,” wrote John Mohawk.<sup>34</sup> Cell phones now provide that ear whispering and bring ideas and perspectives that can be counter to the messages from our culture. In addition, to recover our communal nature, the refocus will be on communal activities that manifest culture.

We are just beginning to understand the addictive nature of Internet Gaming, Facebook and Instagram. At Six Nations the upgrading of high-speed internet services is considered essential for our students to continue their education during the Covid era. As a community we need more conversation on what is appropriate use of technology by secondary school students, and how technology misuse injured student mental and emotional health.

Studies have shown that increasing use of technology have reduced the contact that Indigenous learners have with nature. The amount of physical activity has declined. Modern eating habits have reduced the healthy nutrition that nature can provide. We need to carefully examine the role of technology in the Original School and ensure that it advances the cultural principles and values that we espouse.

### 3.10 Original School Teacher Training

“Experiencing to learn is the foundation of Mohawk pedagogy. The quality of an experience is determined by the level that it lets a student's thinking be informed by the experience and leads to enlightenment or knowledge that has a real-life use or application.”

Jeremy D. Green, present Principal of Kawenní:io-Gawęń:yo Private School, 2020<sup>35</sup>

Our approach is to renew the existing frameworks of Onkwehonwe'neha (the teachings and practice of original ways of being, “the way we live our lives”), and create new frameworks that help students who are unfamiliar with those traditions absorb critical teachings into their personal worldview. The Kayanaren'kó:wa (The Great Law of Peace), Tekéni Teyohà:ke Kahswénhtake (Two Row Wampum), and Ohenton Karihwatehkwen (The Words Before All Else) can all find new life in this new educational framework, not as topics that are studied, but as teaching that inform a way of thinking.

lakotokén:sés Aieweientéhta'ne' (Experiential learning) is an essential part of outdoor education, but can also be integral to everyday classroom experiences. Teachers will have to become experts in variety of educational strategies and learning styles. We recommend an ‘aggressive’ training initiative to help prepare teachers for the unique nature of the Original School classroom atmosphere.

It is equally important that the learners understand the way the colonization works to undermine our traditions and weaken the people's ability to manage their own lives by their own standards. When

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<sup>34</sup> ibid

<sup>35</sup> Green, J., The Oral Literacy Approach, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Hawaii, 2020.

## Original School Feasibility Study

historical trauma is experienced by one generation, the succeeding generations has to pick up the scattered embers of the fire, uplift people's minds that have fallen to the ground, and recover the Good Mind in order to ensure the overall wellbeing of the society as a whole. Teachers will also have to gain expertise in trauma-informed teaching techniques.

In developing Additional Qualification Course: Honour Specialist Native Languages: Kanien'kéha (Mohawk), Specialist <sup>36</sup>, in conjunction with Rotinonhsón:ni language specialists, four questions were asked:

1. What do educators need to Understand?
2. What do educators need to Do?
3. What do educators need to Honour?
4. What do educators need to Know?

Understand, Do, Honour and Know. In order for the Original School to work as intended, the teachers have to understand why the Original School is different; How teachers will implement strategic change and demonstrate new attitudes towards students; Honor the cultural traditions of the Rotinonhsón:ni by demonstrating their validity and applicability to modern life; and know how to carry themselves in a new way, in alignment with the Original School vision, philosophy and teaching practices. Teacher must believe in the premise of this new school and become well versed in the educational strategy and implementation of that strategy. This will require additional training.

Our School will be premised upon the 4R's of education:

- Karihwakweniéhntshera (Respect)
- Onkwaió`téhsera (Responsibility)
- Karihwanó:ron (Relevance)
- Tekarihwaienawá:kon (Reciprocity)

Many teachers are aware of these values and may already have experience in incorporating them into their educational practice. Our teachers will be given the time and support to take these values to a higher level, to ensure they are part of the daily practice. As an example, Ohen:ton Karihwatehkwen, as the traditional opening expression of gratitude, cannot be truly understood nor impactful on one's outlook unless it is comprehended fully – linguistically as well as deep reflection on what it means personally. In addition, it can have different means to different people. Coming to one mind on meaning can be a difficult challenge. Our cultural framework is oriented towards the discussion of these matters, how they are assessed, reflections on meaning, and individual conclusions about their significance. Therefore, the Original School has to be a place that fosters these kinds of dialogues.

“[Rotinonhsón:ni] teachers of the tradition, in my experience, are willing to accept that different people at different stages of life are able to grasp and learn from different elements of the story at different moments. Their point might be only that the story should be told and discussed among the generations,”

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<sup>36</sup> Additional Qualification Course: Honour Specialist Native Languages: Kanien'kéha (Mohawk), Specialist, Schedule D – Teachers' Qualification Regulation, Ontario College of Teachers, January 2020.

## Original School Feasibility Study

stated John Mohawk.<sup>37</sup> His comments remind us that persistent expression of culture, particular oral tradition, is important over time to gain a deeper understanding of cultural premise. Therefore, teachers will do well to determine how an accumulation of traditional knowledge, scaffolds an understanding of the core cultural values. Students will arrive at cultural understandings at different points of their life, and with different depths of understanding. Not everyone is on the same level of cultural and language fluency. Some have very little knowledge. Others have deeper levels of understanding. In designing a culture-based approach, we have had to consider this diversity. Teachers will need to find ways to assist both the novice learner and the more advanced and seek ways for the more advanced knowledge holders to share their teaching with those who are just beginning to explore meaning.

John Mohawk argues that the Great Law of Peace focuses on the use of the Good Mind to create peace. Thus, rationale behaviors and reflective thinking were necessary to create a collective benefit. Consensus building is a key element of the Great Law of Peace that can be incorporated into an educational system. This requires that we put aside thoughts of prejudice, privilege and superiority. This is the antidote to bullying. Restoring a sense of respectful relationships is a core objective of the new framework.

Regaining self-confidence, without becoming arrogant with false pride, is an important attribute of successful Indigenous learners. This is a belief that the learner could and would succeed in their studies. Colonization not only undermines self-confidence; it creates a sense of expected failure. Self-confidence is the ability to overcome the stress of course work load through good literacy skills, study skills, and a willingness to seek help when needed. It is important that the Original School start the learner's journey with a strong sense of self-esteem and self-worth. The teachers at the Original School will be expert at providing constructive criticism, providing effective mentorship, and developing an appropriate learning path and assessments that build inner capacities as well as ensure gaining relevant knowledge.

More than simply a list of good intentions, teachers will have to workshop student-centered approaches that holds the 4R's at their core while achieving the following<sup>38</sup>:

- Advancing a culture of inquiry that collectively examines Rotinonhsón:ni perspectives and ways of knowing, learning and teaching in course expectations, instructional strategies and assessment practices.
- Advancing a culture of inquiry that collectively examines Rotinonhsón:ni history, political system and our cultural connectedness from which Rotinonhsón:ni languages originates.
- Fostering ethical and authentic incorporation of Rotinonhsón:ni culture as the underpinning to the educational experiences.
- Creating understanding and linkages to reveal how Rotinonhsón:ni culture contributes to a strong identity and sense of self.
- Examines culture and history to find case studies that reveal the value and lessons of applying culturally-based decision-making.
- Fosters innovation and creativity in rethinking teaching and learning with a focus on experiential learning.
- Expands learned understanding of the world beyond the community at Six Nations.

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<sup>37</sup> Mohawk, J. *Iroquois creation story*. Buffalo, NY: Mohawk Publications, 2005.

<sup>38</sup> Inspired by Additional Qualification Course Guideline Honour Specialist Native Languages: Kanien'kéha (Mohawk) [Eng] Schedule E – Teachers' Qualifications Regulation January 2021

## Original School Feasibility Study

- Fosters a deeper sense of civic pride in our community and promotes active involvement in keeping cultural practices alive and viable.
- Gain skills in developing engaging and effective classroom teaching strategies
- Nurturing a culture of critical inquiry which allows students to seek and discover ideas, relationships and meaning.
- Incorporating technology where appropriate and hands-on learning as needed.
- Develop land-based learning experiences that reinforce the cultural teachings and a deeper understanding of science and earth systems.
- Experiment with innovative teaching strategies and revise them to accommodate Rotinonhsón:ni thought, philosophy and practice.
- Develop an annual teaching cycle in which the five pathways are responsive to how Rotinonhsón:ni knowledge applies to changing environmental patterns.
- Develop culturally-based assessment strategies.
- Seek and value the input of community elders, educators, artists, culture bearers, storytellers and experienced community members.

### 3.10.1 Developing a Teaching Strategy

A commitment to teacher training and acquisition of additional qualifications will be entrenched in how the Original School operates. The Original School will be basing all decisions for teaching and discipline upon research and knowledge of students' social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development, that are consistent with our cultural values. This can be challenging and will take some time to make sure we get it right, but it is a necessary journey the administration, teachers and parents must take in order to be able to deliver our unique educational experiences. Teachers will workshop a variety of educational strategies including the following:

**A) Inquiry-Based Learning** - an approach to teaching and learning that places students' questions, ideas and observations at the centre of the learning experience. Educators play an active role throughout the process by establishing a culture where ideas are respectfully challenged, tested, redefined and viewed as improvable, moving children from a position of wondering to a position of enacted understanding and further questioning. Inquiry requires more than simply answering questions or getting a right answer. It espouses investigation, exploration, search, quest, research, pursuit, and study. It is enhanced by involvement with a community of learners, each learning from the other in social interaction. We will need to research how inquiry-based learning will help the Original School achieve its goals, by answering these questions:

- How do we instill the skills and the values necessary to experience success in the present and in the future?
- How can we provide opportunities for students to move beyond being passive recipients of knowledge to become knowledge builders, capable of creative and innovative solutions to problems?
- How can we play a role in human progress by equipping our students with the requisite knowledge, skills and dispositions to solve the daunting problems of our age?

**B) Transformative learning** is an approach to education that provides learners with opportunities to experience an accumulation of insights and/or a profound disorienting dilemma that, with the proper

## Original School Feasibility Study

support, can lead to critical reflection on the learners' fundamental assumptions and subsequent transformation of the learners' worldview. Critical reflection of assumptions can lead to a shift in one's meaning schemes, which can cumulatively lead to a shift in meaning perspective.<sup>39</sup>

The teachers at the Original School will examine the theory and practice of transformative learning to develop an appropriate response in relationship to our youth. The phase of transformative learning has application to how we can help our learners understand and dismantle colonized thinking in history, social issues, politics, economics, and law:

- 1 - A disorienting dilemma or series of dilemmas – impact of colonization
- 2 - Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame – impact of Ethnostress (loss of joy)
- 3 - A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions
- 4 - Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change – the need for transformation
- 5 - Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions – creative problem-solving
- 6 - Planning a course of action – planning for change & strategic thinking
- 7 - Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans - mentoring
- 8 - Provisional trying of new roles – experimentation and refinement
- 9 - Renegotiating relationships and negotiating new relationships – diplomacy and cooperation
- 10 - Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships – skills acquisition
- 11 - A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective – the transformative change become real.<sup>40</sup>

If we think of education at the Original School as a process of personal transformation of our learners, this approach might have productive results. We will need to clearly understand our state of colonization, where the learners are at personally in dealing with colonial legacy, and what capacities they have for re-envision a more culturally-congruent future.

**C) Teaching By Doing** - When we think of being Onkwehón:we, we think of us as being stewards of the land – to care and protect it for the sake of the future generations. We can teach this premise, or we can demonstrate it by our actions. By having children participate in stewardship activities on a daily basis will make stewardship a part of their mind-set, whether they ever hear that word or not. We can make stewardship real. Thus, we can describe this method of “Learning by Observing and Pitching In” as “Teaching by Doing” which aligns more tightly with Rotinonhsón:ni educational philosophies.

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<sup>39</sup> Mezirow, J. (2000). *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

<sup>40</sup> Adapted from Mezirow, J. (1994). Understanding transformation theory. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 44(4), 222–232.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/074171369404400403>

## Original School Feasibility Study

Stewardship also goes beyond the management of the environment. It can also include cultivating corn, gardening, raising and protecting domestic animals, health practices, and participating in family ceremonial life. It is really about learning responsibilities and understanding them not as a chore, but as an expression of being Rotinohsón:ni. Such an approach actually builds better relationships between humans, with animals, birds and plants, and with the unseen energies of our world.

This eventually builds self-motivation and responsible actions as the learners begin to understand that their thoughts, words, and actions impact on their larger society, and thus, the realization that the continuation of language and tradition are dependent upon their actions.

**D) “Learning by Observing and Pitching In”**<sup>41</sup> This is one style of learning that we found that appears to be more in line with how our people passed on knowledge and wisdom in the past. This is a culturally-based paradigm or philosophy that integrates children into their community activities and encourages their participation, so that they become eager to take initiative to collaborate with their community among different tasks independently. Those of you who grew up on a farm understand this. It is the social nature of this kind of learning that builds stronger families and communities. Our oldest form of education promoted three essential skills:

- Keen powers of observation – learning how to pay attention and absorb information
- Adults model the behaviors desired in the children – eliminates double standards and establishes community norms of expected behaviors.
- Learners are mentored into skill sets that best fit their inherited gifts and personality

This style focuses on telling narratives (storytelling) and dramatizations (reliving historic events) are often used as a tool to guide learning and development because it helps contextualize information and ideas in the form of remembered or hypothetical scenarios. This simply means that learners can see how what they have learned applies to their real life and they will embrace those teachings more readily. The principles of this style of education include:

*Learner Incorporated & Contributing* - Community organization incorporates children in the range of ongoing endeavors of their families and communities. Children are treated as regular participants in the community, with expectations and opportunities to contribute according to their interests and skills, like everyone else.

*Motive is to Contribute* - Learners are eager to contribute and belong as valued members of their families and communities. They engage with initiative, to fulfill valued roles. Other people present are trying to accomplish the activity at hand and may guide or support the learners’ contributions.

*Social Organization is Collaborative* - The social organization of endeavors involves collaborative engagement as an ensemble, with flexible leadership as the people involved coordinate fluidly with each other. Learners are trusted to take initiative along with the others as everyone fluidly blends their ideas and agendas at a calm mutual pace.

*Goal includes learning responsibility* - The goal of learning is transforming participation to contribute and belong in the community. Such transformation involves learning to collaborate with consideration and

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<sup>41</sup> <https://learningbyobservingandpitchingin.sites.ucsc.edu/overview/>



## Original School Feasibility Study

responsibility, as well as gaining information and skills. (A paradigm shift is involved in thinking of learning as transformation of participation rather than as the acquisition of knowledge and skills.)

*Learning through wide, keen attention* - Learning involves wide, keen attention, in anticipation of or during contribution to the endeavor at hand. Guidance comes from community-wide expectations that everyone contributes with responsibility (as in cultural values indicating that everyone in a family pitch in to help with household work). Guidance may sometimes also come from other people engaged in the activity, supporting learners' opportunities to observe and contribute and sometimes providing pointers regarding the ongoing shared activity.

*Coordination uses shared reference* - Communication is based on coordination among participants that builds on the shared reference available in their mutual endeavors. This involves a balance of articulate nonverbal conversation and parsimonious verbal means. When explanation occurs, it is nested within the shared endeavors, providing information to carry out or understand the ongoing or anticipated activity. Narratives and dramatization that bring remembered or hypothetical scenarios to life also guide learning and development in a way that contextualizes information and ideas in the service of skilled problem-solving and appropriate action.

*Assessment* - Assessment includes appraisal of the success of the support provided for the learner as well as of the learner's name mastery. The purpose of assessment is to aid learners' contributions, and it occurs during the endeavor. Feedback is available from the outcome of learners' efforts to contribute to the endeavor and others' acceptance, appreciation, or correction of the efforts as productive contributions.

**Social-Emotional Learning** - The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning has identified five core competencies surrounding Social-Emotional Learning:

- Understand and manage emotions – not letting rage, revenge or reticence drive how they respond to stressful situations. Display self-control.
- Set and achieve positive goals – thinking pragmatically of achievable milestones.
- Feel and show empathy for others – How to listen and communicate appropriately
- Establish and maintain positive relationships
- Make responsible decisions.

Therefore, the Original School will offer professional development in the **Responsive Classroom** approaches in advance of opening the school, and as an ongoing professional develop strategy that would include:

- Design lessons that are active and interactive, with both academic and cultural standards.
- Use effective teacher language to promote academic and social growth; both English and Onkwehonnehá encouraging and supportive words will be used.
- Encourage engagement by giving students meaningful choices and pathways to learning.
- Start each day in a way that sets a positive tone for learning, with expression of gratitude and hope.
- Set high expectations and teach students how to meet them, through mentoring and positive role models.
- Establish routines that promote autonomy and independence, yet value teamwork and cooperation.

## **Original School Feasibility Study**

- Build a sense of community and shared purpose that will serve both the individual and the collective.

The Original School will implement a learning process and a culture of relationships that empower the learners with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions. This is a critical step in cultural recovery. To achieve this, the school will help learners set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

## 4.0

### Lessons From Within Our Culture

“When we talk about Indigenous Knowledge and Original Instructions, for it to mean something, we have to look at what were the behaviors that people adopted and what were the benefits of those behaviors and what can we learn from studying how they lived and what they did.”

John Mohawk, Ph.D. (Cattaraugus Seneca) <sup>42</sup>

Rotinonhsón:ni philosophy is a way of thinking, believing, and acting holistically. Our philosophy is about building constructive relationships. Everything is connected in some way to everything else. It is only possible to understand something if we understand how it is connected to everything else. This is the lesson behind the Thanksgiving Address. It is not merely a formal protocol; it is meant to refresh your memory about your relationship to all those elements expressed in the Address.

Therefore, the Original School must build awareness and active participation in building the kind of relationships that we should be thankful for. If the relationships are active and beneficial, then the learners appreciate and are more willing to be grateful for what the earth and the unseen forces of the universe provide.

Ultimately, Rotinonhsón:ni education is about instilling the thinking and behaviors that advance the philosophy of the culture. We need clarity on what that thinking is and what kind of behaviors are the new norm. Previous research and sharing from community knowledge carriers give us the scope of what our education experiences can encompass, summarized as follows.

In former times, the home, fields, gardens, fishing camps, woods, and harvesting camps were the places where age-appropriate sharing/teaching took place. There were three primary ways in which children learned: 1) Through Storytelling; 2) Through Observation and Mentoring; 3) By Trial and Error, or hands-on experimentation. Children learned the rhythms of life by observing and practicing what they saw the adults doing. The adults and older siblings were true role models, reflecting the cultural values as caring adults and mentors in the lives of our youth.

Along the way, the adults were keenly observing the growing children to identify their in-born skills and inclinations. Then, when appropriate, the children were assigned special mentors who would help them gain expertise in skills that were more aligned to their abilities and personalities. The core belief was everyone had a unique gift, and no one can master all the skills needed to sustain the society. Therefore, people had to work together and share what they could accomplish to make the collective stronger.

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<sup>42</sup> “From the First to the Last Bite: Learning from the Food Knowledge of Our Ancestors” by John Mohawk in “Original Instructions: Indigenous Teachings for a Sustainable Future”, edited by Melissa K. Nelson (Bear & Country: Rochester, VT) 2008

## Original School Feasibility Study

### 4.1 Longhouse Village Model of Education

*View to the Whole Child* - Children were raised within a network of social relations that provided emotional and mental support, physical nourishment, and ceremony for spiritual wellness. This reminds us that our new plan should pay attention to the holistic needs of our youth.

*Immersed within the Culture* - Culture was not 'taught,' but was experienced in everyday activities. Storytelling and oral tradition helped to make sense out of those activities. This gives us opportunity to seek innovative ways of immersing our students in the cultural context, rather than lecture about the culture.

*Attuned to Natural Cycles* - Children existed within an annual cycle of sustainable practices. Young adults and elders modelled the behaviours expected in the youth. This informs us to arrange our curriculum and educational experiences to be in harmony with the changing seasons.

*Acknowledging Growth* - Rites of Passage mentored children into adult responsibilities, increased sense of self and built nurturing relationships. This requires us to consider the impact of culturally-based, community-centred events to mark passages on the educational pathways of our learners.

*Community Engaged*- Active lifestyle and physical labor to secure lodging, warmth, clothing, and foods kept people healthy with a strong sense of responsibility to contribute to the overall welfare of the village. This inspires us to look more deeply into value-based learning to build personal character and creating civic pride to have our learners become socially-responsible members of our society.

*Experiential Learning* - Instead of written languages, knowledge was transmitted through visual literacy, wampum literacy, hands-on learning, and oral tradition. This encourages us to create educational experiences that go beyond the textbook, beyond the walls of the classroom.

*Seeking the Path* - From an early age, children were active contributors in maintaining the longhouse lifestyle. This encourages us to see the youth not as vessels that need to be filled with information, but rather to help them find the ways to provide meaningful help to the overall strength of our community. Every child is an untapped asset.

*Build Character* - Children learned that violence, greed, lying, and stealing were not socially acceptable. This is the biggest challenge we might face due to existing behavioral practices of many community adults that are harmful to building human unity. We must rely on the creative use of our cultural values to create a new normal.

Experience becomes the best teacher. When things don't work out, the students are not penalized or made to feel inferior. Instead, it is a new opportunity to learn and gain the skills to overcome the problems they face. This is Rotinonhsón:ni mentoring.

Recovery of ancestral skills does not require that we return to the old longhouse lifestyle and give up indoor plumbing and central heating! However, the teaching of ancestral skills can rebuild connections to ideas, practices, and beliefs that can have relevance for the future. It requires a change in attitude and the acquisition of those skills in the teachers who will be mentoring the students and helping them find their path. Learning to make pottery and other crafts is a great way for our youth to gain confidence and cultural fluency. Furthermore, as a territory with significant amounts of clay, students would learn to connect with our specific land-base in a way that is new to them but an ancient practice of the generations

## Original School Feasibility Study

who came before us. The ancient teachings can find new life in how the Original School teaches science, math, and other core academic courses.

### 4.2 Summary of Rotinonhsón:ni Teachings

#### *Learning From Story*

There were core teachings like the Creation Story, Thanksgiving Address, Annual Cycle of Ceremonies, and the Great Law of Peace. Children drew from the teachings that helped them best upon their life path then applied those teachings to their own personal growth. This was seen in collective work ‘bees’ such as planting, cultivating, harvesting, collecting firewood, hunting, fishing, and gathering as well as specialized skills such as tanning hides, making baskets, carving wood, making pottery, singing, dancing, etc. The glue that held all of this together was storytelling.

- Reconnect to the wisdom of the ancestors
- Reconnect with the land, woods, fields, waterways and gardens
- Better understand how the Universe works; why things were the way they were, what was expected of humans
- What kind of behaviors were socially accepted
- what kind of risks existed in the world
- how they could interact with each other in a good way.

Stories also gave the listener the challenge of deriving from the story the lessons they needed personally. Each listener could derive something different from the same story.

#### *Learning from Clay*

Making pottery is more than shaping clay into useful objects. A young person learned to make pottery from elder practitioners, who had learned from their elders. This creates a connection to clay, the substance from which our bodies were made; a connection to the Mother Earth who offers her ‘flesh’ to make useful pottery; it connects the potter to their ancestors who also made pots and the designs inherited from the past forms a bond of continuity; it connects them to the ancestral spirits of the living ecology.

- learn about geology, earth sciences and Rotinonhsón:ni science.
- nature of different types of clay
- need to add shell, sand and minerals to make the clay stronger.
- Effects of fire to transform the soft clay into a pot that can hold water
- different types of woods that produce the most heat to harden the clay.
- significance of the designs
- Learn that complex ideas can be symbolized by graphic design
- Learn a sense of beauty, in shape, design and texture.
- Learn to apply creativity and innovation to the process.
- learn to trouble-shoot along the way when things don’t go the way you expected them to go.

The ancient pottery has stylistic commonalities, but no two are exactly alike. Designs change through time. We need to find a way in which this ancient process of connectivity can be ‘reborn’ into a modern

## Original School Feasibility Study

educational experience. This teaches abstract thinking and visual literacy. This is Rotinonhsón:ni aesthetics.

We have also learned that colonization disrupted this process, and the expertly made clay pots were replaced by manufactured brass and iron kettles. While these trade goods may have been more durable and longer lasting, something was lost when our ancestors stopped making pottery for their home use. A connection to the land was weakened, and new values introduced by the fur trade changed the way we looked at material objects. Competition crept in and rather than have the pleasure of making what was needed, our ancestors began to sacrifice the animals in order obtain more commercial goods. We also know that this shift coincided with epidemic diseases and that our ancestors made the shift to manufactured goods at a time when they were experiencing great loss – teaching about this aspect of our population history has renewed relevance in this time of a global pandemic.

### *View from the Cradleboard*

Before formal ‘schools’, our ancestors believed in education, it just had a different form. They shared their knowledge and experiences, mentoring the youth in what it means to be Rotinonhsón:ni, mostly through the example they set, the activities they performed and lifestyle they lived.

That old-style education started in the womb. Parents and extended family made sure that the growing child only heard good words, good music, and shared in the love of family.

Once a child came into this world, they were greeted with words of welcome that tethered them to their family and their home. Every human brings a special gift, a desire to do good in some area of life. Therefore, we welcome them and look forward to helping them reveal and nurture that gift.

As the baby grew, a cradleboard was used to protect the baby. Safety wrapped on the cradleboard, the baby listened and watched the world unfold around them. They became attuned to the rhythm of life. They observed how the culture and nature works. They were immersed in their language. They were celebrated within the community.

The wooden cradleboard literally surrounded the child with powerful symbols of life in the way it was carved and painted. Recurring symbols included the Sky Dome to represent the universe in which they were born, the clans of the parents that they were born into, the Tree of Life that will sustain them, beautiful flowers, and birds to connect them to the powers of nature, and a flowering tree to recall the tree that grows in the Sky World. Growing up on the cradle board, combined with the power of the wood, produces a different kind of child whose identity and relationships began in a beautiful way.

Our secondary school must be like that cradle board of the past – a protective place where identity, individuality, and connections to tradition, family and community can flourish.

### *Living in the Long House*

The original home of our ancestors – the bark-covered longhouse – is also a model for our school. Not necessarily in the physical sense, but in the values and ethics that longhouse lifestyle required of the residents of the longhouse.

For longhouse culture to work, the youths were mentored to understand that their conduct contributed to the peace and safety of their house and their neighboring longhouses.

## Original School Feasibility Study

The longest longhouse known was at Onondaga, the Capitol of the Confederacy, dating to about 1380-1400 A.D. the house ran 334 feet in length (known as the Howlett Hill Site, six miles south of present-day Syracuse, NY).<sup>43</sup> That is longer than a football field. Think for a moment of what it would take to live inside that house with all your relatives from your mother's side of the family. Think of what it was like to literally walk through everyone's living space on the way to your own berth. Families shared a fire. Youths provided firewood. Adults made tools, utensils, and clothing. Hunters shared food and everyone helped at harvest time.

Our ancestors grew up learning that respect and sharing were essential for such a lifestyle to function peacefully. Everyone contributed to child rearing. Violence in the longhouse was not tolerated. It was a safe place for children. The interior, although sparse, was warm and welcoming. Everyone mattered inside the longhouse, and everyone was related. Our school needs this kind of feeling, where people know that what they do matters to the overall well-being of your relatives and the community. To be born into a longhouse family was to be in service to that family. The families combined their strength by living under one law, acting as one body, and speaking with one voice. We can recover that attitude in how we craft the Original School.

We have an opportunity to creatively apply the principles of longhouse architecture to create a new kind of learning/mentoring space. The old bark covered longhouses, by design, promoted values such as sharing, respect and social unity. People worked consciously to keep peace inside the longhouse. Everyone mattered, everyone was tended to, everyone helped. Our new school will be premised upon the social, cultural, and ecological principles of our ancestors. Working with "Net Zero" engineering and design principles, we can be a living example of the values expressed in our Thanksgiving Address.

### 4.3 Values and Ethics: Tradition of the Good Mind

"The capacity of the Good Mind is the ability at any moment, with or without pressure, regardless of the nature or intensity of the situation, one is able to respond with a peaceful decisive act. The Good Mind is defined as a holistic source, not as a single function of a person but about balancing one's thoughts, feelings, and actions through the skill of meaningful communication and interaction."

Robert Antone, Ph.D. (Oneida)<sup>44</sup>

What is needed is a new value system to drive the underlying philosophy of the Original School, a unique educational offering for secondary students. Following the model of Stephen Covey's *Seven Habits of Highly Successful Schools*, a secondary school at Six Nations needs to have the following characteristics:

*Characteristic One – A Proactive School:* Our school will encourage our learners to take responsibility for their learning and life choices through proactive decision-making. This means that the school will provide

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<sup>43</sup> Tuck 1971:77–82; Nabokov and Eston 1989:78–79, 82.

<sup>44</sup> Antone, R. (2013). Yukwalihowanahutu yukwanosaunee tsiniyukwaliho:t^ As people of the Longhouse, we honor our way of life tekal^hsal^ tsiniyukwaliho:t^ praise our way of life (Doctoral dissertation). State University of New York, Buffalo.

## Original School Feasibility Study

the best of traditional knowledge and modern technology so that students can gain more self-awareness and follow a variety of educational pathways. The school will operate in the most efficient way to address a variety of learning styles and life-long learning challenges.

*Characteristic Two – Begin With the End In Mind:* Our school is based upon the long-term vision of building stronger character, resilient personalities and self-reliant skills in our learners. By strengthening cultural identity and addressing the holistic needs of the learners, our graduates will be better prepared to face life and more likely to continue their educational journey.

*Characteristic Three – Put First Things First:* Conceiving a unique school is the first step. It is based upon previous research conducted in our community, and led by the thinking of our own community scholars and educators. This report outlines the parameters of the secondary school and identifies the values, philosophies and strategies needed to move forward on the concept.

*Characteristic Four – Think Winning Thoughts:* A positive attitude is critical to developing the secondary school and overcoming challenges to provide more benefit for our learners, our teachers, and our community. Through this strategy we will invest more in the future of our youth and ensure that their education is more relevant to their lives.

*Characteristic Five - Seek First To Understand, Then To Be Understood:* This project took into consideration of the valuable research previously conducted, expression of community interest, and then considered carefully the stumbling blocks identified through community consultations. Once we understood the desire and intent of the community, we applied creativity to develop an approach to address our unique situation and unique needs. Through a community consultation process, we will communicate the nature of this school and gain community consensus.

*Characteristic Six – Synergize:* Collaboration is key, and we have considered the research conducted by the Life-Long Learning Task Force, various research reports and academic studies, student concerns, community-based training strategies, current primary school operations, and the experiences of Indigenous post-secondary programs to create this proposal for a unique school. It reflects the diverse interests and experiences with the Six Nations of the Grand River community.

*Characteristic Seven - Sharpen the Saw:* Self-renewal, self-care, self-respect, and self-improvement are the critical matters that will make this secondary school successful. It is about building both individual and collective capacities to develop the skills needed to face adult life, pursue meaningful careers, and recover a caring society that was characteristic of our past.

The process of creating a secondary school is about building a school attitude and culture that places the interests of the students first and foremost. Six Nations has both unique needs and unique talents. The school will take a united effort of learners, parents, educators, and community agencies to create more opportunity for our youth. They will become leaders – of their own lives, within the community and with the fields of study that they choose. Our cultural values will be the foundation for this character development, yet the students will become equipped to face a vastly different world that their ancestors ever faced. This will require additional skills and inspiration. The Original School will be prepared to deliver on these unique student needs.



## Original School Feasibility Study

### 4.4 Bringing Rotinonhsón:ni Values Alive

Our ancestors had a worldview that can still benefit our people today. They believed in what is called Ka'nikonhrí:io, or the Good Mind, and prided themselves on an ability to use the power of reason and creativity to navigate the issues they faced. One founding belief was that we are given a mind so that we can figure out the best course of action to follow, personally and collectively. We are also endowed with free will to think logically of how to achieve a state of peacefulness through the choices we make. This is the Good Mind in action.

Tradition teaches that the intent of our minds should always seek peace and want to treat others respectfully, as if we were members of one large family. When we do so, we are known to have a Good Mind that is both rational and intuitive. Thus, if we use a Good Mind, our quality of life will continue as intended. This is our responsibility as Rotinonhsón:ni and can be the foundation of the Original School.

Drawing from the Peacemaker when he was establishing the Great law of Peace, where he said, "Treat everyone as if they are members of one family," we must embrace our diversity, and learn from each other, rather than shun someone for their personal beliefs. The Peacemaker encouraged us to embrace differences while keeping three core values in the front of our thinking:

- Use our Good Minds to be fair and inclusive
- United our Good Minds to become strong and promote justice
- Promote Peaceful relations and promote empathy and friendship

Ka'nikonhrí:io is a way of life, a way of fostering healthy relationships. By having Ka'nikonhrí:io as a core principle in how we operate the Original School, the journey of the students at this school will build the type of character necessary to rebuild our nations and return peacefulness to our community.

#### *Value of Seven Spans of Skin*

"A leader must have seven layers of skin so those [critical] words don't penetrate and cause him [or her] to think thoughts which are not in the interest of peace and the well-being of everyone."

Chief Leon Shenandoah (Onondaga) (1915-1996)

In the past our leaders were instructed to be resilient, and to not let cruel comments or gossip detract them from their purpose. Colonization has wounded our people deeply and that wound has gotten worse over the generations. The poor performance of our children in trying to meet the academic standard created by the colonizer is evidence of this situation.

For our youth to not just survive education, but rather to thrive in their life because of life-long learning, we must strengthen their heart, mind and spirit. We must help them expand their 'skin' to seven spans thick so that they will not be wounded by bullying, peer pressure, or self-doubt. We will use words of encouragement, kind, and caring words, in order to build their self-esteem and better personal relationships.

Seven Spans of Skin does not mean that a person becomes callous and uncaring about others. Having compassion is a foundation of the Good Mind. Seven Spans protects the Good Mind and allows for peace to be the primary goal. Helping our youth deal with lateral violence, racism, and community anger, fear, and feelings of hopelessness is critical to helping them recover their Onkwehón:we frame of mind.

## Original School Feasibility Study

### 4.5 Leadership Traditions: Living History

When the Europeans arrived, our lives were about to change. No one knew just how much. However, our ancestors welcomed the Newcomers to our fires. They held ceremonies to unburden whatever might be affecting the Newcomers. We needed them to be healthy if we were to make peace.

Our ancestors extended the rafters of their longhouse to cover and protect the visitors. They made family of them often bestowing clan names on their officials. The idea was that to maintain peace, we had to consider each other as relatives, and like the longhouse, we wanted to keep peace within the family.

This is a very important lesson, despite how the Newcomers behaved. Our culture is about accepting diversity and embracing friendship. The foundations of that friendship were a deep respect for one another, and sense of trust between people and the kind of friendship that ensures peaceful relations, which can become so strong that they can overcome any temporary setback, including war and death.

Our Original School needs that same approach. Within our community is great diversity. Not all the people in our community are Rotinonhsón:ni. Not everyone has a clan. Not everyone believes in the ceremonies. This new school must be inclusive and respect social and cultural differences. We will not force any belief on anyone. We will share our knowledges so that all children feel valued and find ways to employ their personal beliefs to build peace.

An important part of this style of education is the re-examination of history. *Retraditionalization* is a way of revisiting history to find original meanings as they pertain today. This process is a revisiting of history and historic sites to find the meaning that has been lost in the historical story telling process (usually by the victor, or without an Indigenous perspective). Tim Johnson (Grand River Mohawk), program consultant, has developed a Living History program through the Landscape of Nations 360° Indigenous Education Project. He has organized educators, Indigenous historians, and various specialists to develop a comprehensive learning strategy to identify key understandings of Indigenous history and culture. This could serve as a core curriculum plan for the Original School. In addition, Johnson has designed and conducted teacher training sessions and historic site learning opportunities that demonstrate how to connect our teachers and learners to the places that have been historically and culturally significant to our people. This draws upon previous work done by Jake Thomas, Norma Jacobs and Bonnie Whitlow known as the Peacemaker's Journey, taking Six Nations people on a field trip to retrace the steps of the Peacemaker and learn about the Great Law of Peace.

Akwesasne Cultural Restoration Program - The program, established in 2013, aims to give youth in the community the necessary skills, knowledge and experiences in land, language and culture to help the Mohawks of Akwesasne retain and regenerate land-based practices in the community. The ACR program works to restore four areas of traditional cultural practices in the areas of fishing and river use, hunting and trapping, traditional medicines and healing, and horticultural and traditional foods that have been harmed by contamination. Using an apprenticeship approach, pairing adult learners with experienced Master Teachers focused on transferring knowledge of land-based traditional practices through hands-on experience to harvest, prepare, store, and produce traditional items.

The Akwesasne Freedom School (AFS) is a Mohawk immersion school founded in 1979. The AFS mission: "Through our language the Akwesasne Freedom School will support and encourage a process for each to learn their roles and responsibilities as Rotinonhsón:ni through an understanding of the Ohenton

## **Original School Feasibility Study**

Karihwatekwen (Opening Address) as the core of their learning 7 experience. The guiding principles of Sken:nen (Peace), Ka'sastenhsera (Power), Ka'nikonri:io (Good Mind) will thrive and be heard in the voices of our children for the next seven generations." The emphasis is on teaching culturally appropriate curriculum using hands-on, total participatory response (TPR) methods that focus on traditional land based cultural practices to our youth while advancing their Mohawk language fluency. The school conducts year-round, full day classes for grades pre-k to grade 9 for approximately 80 students.

## 5.0

### What Our Scholars Say Community-Based Research

"Ó:nen akwé:kon ensewérheke' ensewa'nikonhratokenháti'e'ne' ne ní:ioht tsi rotirihwatokenhstonháti'e'  
ne ionkhisothshera'shon'kénha'

("Now you all will think that you will be going along with an informed mind of the ways that our  
grandparents of old times arranged the matters.")

Mid-Winter Speech of Encouragement, translated by Jeremy Green <sup>45</sup>

The scholarship since the 1970s has revealed that the previous assimilationist course of action in education by and large failed the Indigenous learners. Indigenous Educational Research generally has shown five things:

- Cultural understandings and character building are essential for Indigenous learners to succeed.
- Our students need to be valued, nurtured and challenged in respectful ways.
- Mental health issues are the number one concern of the current generation of Indigenous post-secondary learners.
- Every Individual brings intellectual, emotional, social, cultural, and/or artistic gifts that need to be nurtured with increasing mastery.
- High dropout rates in secondary and post-secondary reveal deep-seated problems with the current approach to Indigenous education. <sup>46</sup>

Rotinonhsón:ni scholars have shown that our culture is the foundation for good character traits that come from behaviors that nurture the common good, and for expressing our gratitude for the beauty and bounty of this world. Our scholars also point out that many of our people, because of colonization, have not kept the Good Mind. As a community, we suffer from the consequences of colonization. We need to return to our Good Mindedness to rebuild our society. We have to deal with the realities of our youth and use techniques like that of the R.E.A.L. School, as practiced by Diane Hill and Jordan Miller (<http://getrealschool.com/>) to change the negative energy that our youth have adopted because of colonization and change that to positive energy so that they can embark on a journey of self-discovery to become leaders of their own life.

In 1994 the Community Education Project (CEP), a three-year study, stated: "we are responsible for children and future generations; children need education; education can rebuild our community;

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<sup>45</sup> Green, J., The Oral Literacy Approach, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Hawaii, 2020.

<sup>46</sup> High dropout rates in secondary and post-secondary reveal deep-seated problems with the current approach to Indigenous education.

## Original School Feasibility Study

community controls type/quality of education; our people are capable of operating our education system; if we don't control education, someone else will."

In 2001 Bomcor and Associates found that school attendance was poor, test scores were below average. Six Nations provincial testing scores fell in the bottom 1/3 of provincial schools of Ontario with many scores ranking so low they had to be thrown out of provincial reports. These test scores were considered a direct attribute of the heightened dropout rates of on-reserve students from off-reserve secondary schools.

"When an individual does not have a strong foundation or sense of being within their culture, it is like they don't know their role or how to act with other members. This concept is true among the Haudenosaunee people; the collectiveness is a foundation that defines the position of the individual within the group. If an individual is experiencing a problem, this has a ripple effect on all people within the group. The group is resilient enough to reorganize themselves, as well as support the individual who is going through a difficult time," writes Dr. Bonnie Freeman from Six Nations<sup>47</sup>

Academic scholarship and Indigenous educators advocate that Second Language instruction improves overall school performance, cognitive development, problem-solving abilities, and increases creativity. A recent survey of Indigenous education theory and practices identify a list of strategies that we need to consider:

- To meet each learner through a unique, challenging educational experience that encourages wonder, fosters inspiration and leads to fulfilment of life's purpose. This means that we have to find a more creative way to help prepare our youth for adulthood that provide personal meaning to them. This would also mean that we need a variety of learning styles at play in the Original School.
- To provide a safe and supportive environment that fosters respectful communication, community collaboration, critical thinking skills, and individual creativity. This means that we need to create a school atmosphere that fosters those kinds of attributes. It will also require a different kind of emotional stability in our students to take their education more seriously.
- To create learning spaces that help students become inspired and equipped to pursue their interests with passion and courage. This means we have to move past the standard classroom with desks in a row facing the teacher. We need mentoring spaces (indoor and outdoor), hands-on laboratories, creative spaces, more welcoming spaces for teachers, students and community.
- To create an innovative environment designed to support high achievement, strong engagement, student well-being, and an intentional fostering of community. This means that students require more flexibility, more time outdoors, and time to workshop ideas, and more spaces that foster stronger social unity. The spaces within and surrounding the Original School have to be flexible, connected to high-speed Internet service, made with healthy materials, and designed to reflect the core strengths of Haudenosaunee culture.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Bonnie Freeman, "Resiliency of a People: A Haudenosaunee Concept of Helping," MSW Thesis, 2004

<sup>48</sup> Caring and Safe School in Ontario, n.d. [http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/caring\\_safe\\_school.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/caring_safe_school.pdf)

## Original School Feasibility Study

Diane Longboat, Mohawk educator from Grand River, proved the validity of culturally-responsive education is a valued tool to increase academic performance for Indigenous students with the development of the whole child with social and emotional literacy, self-esteem based on identity development, cognitive excellence, linguistic fluency, spiritual maturity, and optimal physical development. Longboat sees this approach as a central pillar in Indigenous Nation Building and Indigenous sovereignty, provided that the Indigenous community “accepts the challenge of building its citizens with the necessary capacity to be fully fluent, culturally grounded in history, ceremony and customs with the necessary modern skills and abilities to contribute in the larger social framework of the country.”<sup>49</sup>

Longboat examined a number of working models in various Indigenous communities. The Native Hawaiian case study revealed that cultural connectedness in learners was depended upon six factors:

- Cultural Attachment – They had to have a feeling that their culture was real.
- Indigenous language – The words and expressions of their ancestors hold keys of understanding.
- Connection to land – They had to feel a spiritual connection to place.
- Connection to family – They had to have strong family relationships
- Cultural/Customary practices – They had to know the ancestral way of life
- Culturally-based achievement motivation – They had to experience the love and care of their culture.

Theresa McCarthy, Ph.D., conducted a 1994 study at Cayuga Secondary School in Cayuga, ON. McCarthy interviewed several students to assess their attitudes and experiences in transition to a non-Rotinonhsón:ni secondary school. Such transition was full of conflicting emotions such as:

- Tension
- Apprehension
- Fear of racism and prejudice
- Stereotypes
- Misunderstanding, being labeled ‘dumb and stupid’
- Little sympathy for missing school due to ceremonies
- Feeling outnumbered
- Tension over not standing for the Canadian anthem
- Feeling disrespected
- Anti-Native bias in textbooks and inaccurate history
- Assumption of inadequacies of Indigenous learners
- Friendships are usually transitory, limited to in class or at school.

On the other hand, some of the Six Nations students in McCarthy’s study stated that going to schools away from the community offered the following:

- Learning how to cope with racism can be an asset
- More athletic opportunities
- You learn to defend yourself as Onkwehón:we

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<sup>49</sup> Longboat, Kahontakwas Diane. 2012. Soul of Sovereignty, The Impact of Culturally Responsive Education on the Academic Achievement of First Nations Students. Ottawa, Ont. Assembly of First Nations. P 27

## Original School Feasibility Study

- Culture, language, and ceremonies fosters identity no matter what happens in school

Sabrina Redwing Saunders, Ph.D., in interviews with students, found that “13% stated that students who leave to attain secondary, post-secondary, or to seek employment will have to rest on the strength of their cultural identity if they are to remain a cultural person. The off-reserve youth identity was discussed as being in a —war zone and —under attack by the [local] students/staff and curriculum. As such, those who question their own identity may be more willing to rescind their own being and transform into the person which they feel will be allowed to succeed by the dominant community.” Saunders found that some students decided it is easier to get through school if they just blended in, but risked losing their cultural identity and resilience. Saunders discovered five main areas for improvement: relevance to the learner and real life; inclusion of practical and hands-on learning; respect for individual learners in their environment; community involvement, and up-to-date materials and resources. The students wanted respect in place of racism. They also felt that the attitudes and actions of the non-community schools were outdated and not reflective of Rotinonhsón:ni realities. Saunders concluded that where there is no trust, there can be no real sharing, which stifles constructive relationships.

Saunders’ research identified various successful student indicators through a series of interviews <sup>50</sup>:

- Self-aware and a self-advocate to live safely and promote a healthy lifestyle (19%)
- Self-confidence and voice (17%)
- Ability to function in a bi-cultural world (14%)
- Academic Achievement (11%)
- Cultural Identity and Cultural Values (11%)
- Responsibility and preparedness (10%)
- Balance/holism (9%)

Sixty-seven percent of participants in Sanders’ study stated a major aspect of success was capacity, the student’s ability to be able to compete: compete in the global market, compete in a world which may not see them as a future leader; compete in a future job market which tests their own innate understanding of the world and what it means to be Rotinonhsón:ni.

There were no dominant indicators identified. However, the top rated (Self-aware and a self-advocate in order to live safely and promote a healthy lifestyle) is an important feature that we need to keep in mind. Making the Original School safe and free from bullying will be a challenge.

Dr. Redwing-Saunders summarized her research noting that: “The overall understanding gained from the documents [council minutes and resolutions] is that education at Six Nations is not the responsibility of the community or Band, but rather outsourced to INAC. Therefore, the educational capacities referred to within the documents included such areas as recognition awards for excellence in attendance for high school, paragraph reports listed in the annual report from the education counselors, and the occasional mention of educational attainment, involvement as representative on Superintendent search committees and the need for INAC to repair the current system.”

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<sup>50</sup> Redwing Saunders, S., The State of First Nations Education: Two Conversations About Education Post-RCAP, Ph.D. Dissertation, OISE, University of Toronto, 2001

## Original School Feasibility Study

This point is critical. Our community, for the longest time, had an attitude that it is the outside government's responsibility for education on the Territory. Things are beginning to change. The outside governments have a responsibility to help fund our education system but should no longer determine the nature of that education. If we want our children to be independent and self-reliant, we can demonstrate those traits in how we develop, fund, and operate the Original School.

Claudine Van Every-Albert has found that we need to look to our cultural foundations for an inherent understanding of who we are, then apply that understanding to the classroom. Our students learn best by observation, mentoring and doing. "We are here today because we are a collective," says Van Every-Albert, "Teamwork and helping each other were the hallmarks of our society." We need to understand our history foster deep thinking to solve the problems we face today. We need to overcome self-defeating attitudes. According the Van Every-Albert, the restoration of family values and household functions is important in order to build capacities in future parents. She asks a simple but profound question: "What kind of people do we want in the next generation?"

Kimberly Jackie Lyman-Wright (Gonyadeyates), Seneca Nation, conducted a Survey of the Educational Practices of the Rotinonhsón:ni Confederacy in 2016. Her research documented the need to help Rotinonhsón:ni youth acquire tools to cope with trauma and how to rise above the traumatic events that may have occurred to the students themselves or the student's families. Lyman-Wright determined that such tools can be found in the five essential teachings of the Rotinonhsón:ni:

- Creation Story – the foundation of the culture
- Ceremonies – expressions of gratitude for what the Creation provides
- Opening Address/Thanksgiving Address – reaffirming relationships within the Universe
- Clans – importance of kinship relations
- Great Law of Peace – The Use of the Good Mind to resolve matters through consensus

Rachel Bomberry in seeking new ways to improve the health of female youth at Grand River interviewed a number of young learners in the community and identified a number of factors that would impact on the Original School. Bomberry felt strongly that "Self-care, self-esteem, and self-identity are essential to achieving healthy development and enhancing quality of life." Therefore, we considered her finding in developing our plan:

- Classes in healthy development
- Language classes
- Improve Connections to Medicines
- More personal fitness opportunities
- Stress management through creative arts
- Life promotion skills like self-care, cooking, promoting a Good Mind
- More recreational opportunities like swimming
- More communal feasting
- More recycling opportunities
- More youth trips

Rebecca Jamison, President and CEO of Six Nations Polytechnic and long-time leader of education at Six Nations stated the need: "What is needed is Indigenous-based education that will no longer contribute to



## Original School Feasibility Study

the marginalization of Indigenous learners. What is needed is Indigenous-based education that removes the blocks to entry to education. It's time to maximize the strategies that work. We know that students are highly successful when they learn in a relevant Indigenous environment. This, coupled with adequately resourced success-focused re-engagement strategies for adult learners and education that will prevent disengagement of the younger learners, will close that gap.”<sup>51</sup>

Mohawk scholar Sylvia Maracle conceives of an Indigenous identity formation process as having four interrelated components:

- Resisting negative definitions of being
- Reclaiming Indigenous tradition
- Constructing a positive identity by translating tradition into the contemporary context
- Acting on that identity in a way that nourishes the overall wellbeing of our communities

As Maracle and other academic scholars have found, culture is the antidote to these negative images of self. The Original School will seek creative ways to help our students recover a healthier sense of self.

### 5.1 Areas of Concern

What we plan to achieve with our learners can have a positive impact on their future lives. At the same time, what experiences, attitudes and behaviors the learners bring to the Original School can impact negatively upon their chances for success. The expectations for success of the Original School could be mitigated by several important factors:

*Primary School Preparation* – If academic, attitudes and achievements are not properly supported in the primary grades, it will be difficult, not impossible, to start with the ninth graders on the pathways of the Original School. Some of the philosophy of the Original School needs to be evident in the lower graders so that the proper tone, atmosphere and caring can be felt by the students earlier in their educational experiences.

*Emotional Balance* – If the students enter the Original School still carrying the burdens of Ethnostress, it will be difficult, not impossible, to uplift their minds from the emotional trauma that they carry. However, this will have to be dealt with openly at the Original School as we need to address the whole child. Early intervention in younger students whose life experiences have traumatized them is recommended so that by the time their face puberty, their whole person is stronger to assume more responsibilities for their learning and they have a desire to build healthy relationships.

*Nutritional Deficiencies* – If the entering students are addicted to nutritionally-weak foods, and have adopted an inactive lifestyle, it will be difficult, not impossible to change the quality of food they consume and gain stronger physical fitness. Education studies have documented the importance of healthy nutrition upon the ability to learn, retain and integrate cultural teachings. How we obtain food and deliver it to the students and faculty has to be a demonstration of the underlying cultural values that we advocate. The Original School will become a Rotinohsón:ni food system in itself, providing for the nutrition necessary for a healthy mind, body and spirit.

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<sup>51</sup> Proceedings of the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, Issue 20 - Evidence - April 11, 2017

## **Original School Feasibility Study**

*Anti-Social Behaviors* – There is no doubt that primary schools in our community suffer a high rate of bullying among the children. This includes physical, mental, emotional and verbal abuse. These behaviors will not be tolerated in the Original School however, an entering student who feels they can get away with bullying can upset the ability of our programs to be effective. The Original School will require a Good Mind in all of our learners and that Good Mind needs to start to grow before they enter our school.

## 6.0

### Facility and Site Requirements

An expert panel defined secondary school space requirements as three different categories:

- Instructional Areas – classrooms and teaching areas
- Operational Areas – administrative building system and staff spaces
- Gross Up Area – space not measured directly within schools such as corridors, hallways and wall thicknesses

#### Instructional Areas

- Classrooms
- Science Lab
- Business/Computer Room
- Music Room
- Visual Arts/Performing Arts
- Technology Lab Large
- Technology Lab Small
- Family Studies
- Storage Special Education Area
- Resource Area
- Gymnasium and Exercise Room
- Change Rooms
- Cafeteria/Cafetorium
- Stage
- Library

#### Operational Areas

- General Office
- Guidance Area
- Staff Room and Teacher Work Rooms
- Cooperative Education Office
- Meeting Room
- Kitchen/Servery
- Custodial Areas
- Academic Storage
- Washrooms
- Mechanical Spaces
- Gymnasium Storage

To determine the size of these spaces, the Expert Panel used the following formula<sup>52</sup>:

$$\frac{\{\text{Proposed enrolment} \times 7.5\}}{21} \div 8 = \text{total classrooms}$$

{ 21 }

The proposed enrolment is multiplied by the average number of credits per student (7.5), and then is divided by the average class size for a secondary school (21) to determine the number of sections created. The number of sections is then divided by the number of instructional periods for an academic year (8) and rounded to the nearest whole number.

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<sup>52</sup> Building Our Schools, Building Our Future - A Report from the Expert Panel on Capital Standards, 2010

## Original School Feasibility Study

As an example, if visual and performing arts accounted for 10% of the credits need to graduate (750 credits total), then four arts rooms would be needed.

### Instructional Areas

- a) *Regular Classrooms* - The secondary school is comprised of a number of regular classrooms for programs including mathematics, English, French, history, geography, modern languages, civics, careers, law, sociology and health education. The number of regular classrooms calculated by the template is 51 per cent of the total number of classrooms required. The proposed size of a regular classroom is 750 square feet (69.98m<sup>2</sup>) each.
- b) *Science Labs* - The science lab is intended to deliver a range of programs including general science, biology, chemistry and physics. The Expert Panel recommends that a single standard be applied to all science labs. Science labs are proposed to be 1,250 square feet (116.13 m<sup>2</sup>) each in size and include a portion of the shared preparation room(s) associated with the labs and all storage within the room.
- c) *Business/Computer Room* - The business/computer classroom includes areas for the use of computers for class instruction. The programs using these rooms include business, marketing, accounting, and computer studies. The Expert Panel recommends that the computer lab/business classroom be 1,040 square feet (96.62 m<sup>2</sup>), and include any required storage within the room, excluding any Local Area Network (LAN) or hub rooms.
- d) *Music Room* - A music room is designed for a range of programs including vocal music, instrumental music, keyboard music, music repertoire, and guitar. The room includes instrument storage, practice rooms and a main performance area. The Expert Panel recommends music rooms be 1,390 square feet (129.134 m<sup>2</sup>) each, inclusive of all storage and practice rooms, but excluding the area of the music office.
- e) *Visual Arts/Performing Arts* - A visual/performing arts room is designed for a range of programs including art, drama, media arts, photography or dance. The specific room details required for each of the programs may be different with respect to the required height and associated ancillary spaces. These spaces may include storage rooms, change rooms, dressing rooms, or kiln rooms depending on the specific program. The Expert Panel recommends that the arts rooms be 1,130 square feet (104.98 m<sup>2</sup>) including the required ancillary spaces for each type of arts program, but excluding the associated office area.
- f) *Gymnasium and Exercise Room* - The gymnasium and exercise room are used for physical education programs and support a range of curricular, co-curricular and community activities which require a large instructional space. It is recommended that the provision of both gymnasium and exercise facilities be combined within the secondary school template. The recommended area of the gymnasium and exercise room is twelve square feet per student with a minimum of 7,000 square feet for a school less than 500 students, a minimum of 8,000 square feet for a school with 500 to 700 students, and a maximum size of 13,500 square feet (1,254.19 m<sup>2</sup>) for the combined gymnasium and exercise room for each secondary school, exclusive of the area for the physical education office. The Expert Panel also reviewed the provision of change rooms and storage to support the gymnasium and exercise room. Change rooms of 690 square feet (64.10 m<sup>2</sup>) each are to be provided in a secondary school, and include the area required for washroom facilities or showers. For schools larger than 700 students four change rooms are provided.

## Original School Feasibility Study

- g) *Family Studies* - The family studies room supports a range of programs offered including textiles, fashion, foods and nutrition. The room includes the instruction areas, project areas, space for relevant equipment, project storage and materials storage. The family studies room is proposed to be 1,230 square feet (114.27 m<sup>2</sup>) in size inclusive of all facilities identified above.
- h) *Special Education* - Area Special education rooms are teaching spaces used for a range of withdrawal or self-contained programs for students and are not loaded. The provision of special education rooms varies from board to board. Given the range of needs, flexibility is critical to allow boards to support students; therefore, special education programs should be based on an area per student. It is recommended that 2.0 square feet per student, with a minimum of 750 square feet (69.68 m<sup>2</sup>), be provided for each school.
- i) *Resource Area* - Resource areas are smaller teaching spaces used for a range of withdrawal and support programs and are not loaded. These Resource Areas can also be used to support Student Success Programs. The programs may be filled with different numbers of students or staff on a daily basis. Given the range of existing resource room sizes, flexibility is critical to allow boards to support students in a number of ways; therefore, the Expert Panel recommends that resource areas be based on an area per student basis. The space proposed is 2.0 square feet per student with a minimum of 750 square feet (69.68 m<sup>2</sup>) for each school.
- j) *Cafeteria / Cafetorium* - The cafeteria / cafetorium is used daily in conjunction with the servery for lunch and may also be used with greater hours of operation by students and staff during the day. It includes the main seating area, the associated storage area for chairs and tables, but excludes the servery, stage and other attached uses which are defined elsewhere in the template. Aside from the gymnasium, the cafeteria / cafetorium is usually the largest space within a secondary school and is used by the school for a number of curricular and extra-curricular purposes including performances, assemblies, large group instruction and meetings. The cafeteria /cafetorium is proposed to be 5.0 square feet per student with a minimum area of 2,500 square feet for a secondary school less than 500 students. The Original School would be twice that size or about 4,500 square feet (418.06 m<sup>2</sup>).
- k) *Stage* - The stage is an area used to support the performing arts and is usually located adjacent to the cafeteria. It includes the area of the main stage, thrust stage area, all lighting control areas, dressing rooms and storage attached to the stage area, but excludes other attached rooms such as a theatre arts room or the cafeteria. The area of the stage is proposed to be 1,500 square feet (139.35 m<sup>2</sup>) for schools greater than 500 students.
- l) *Library* - Secondary schools use the library for a number of curricular and extra-curricular purposes, including areas for computer access, small seminar spaces, research and general reading. The library includes the main reading area, the library collection, any attached AV room, librarian work rooms, seminar rooms and computer area. The Expert Panel recommends a standard of 4.0 square feet per student with a minimum area 2,800 square feet (260.13 m<sup>2</sup>) for a school between 500 and 700 students. The proposed area is to be inclusive of all of the areas identified above. With the development of digital and electronic media there may be a reduced reliance on the storage of printed materials; therefore, the area defined for library could be flexibly planned for an alternative use. (An alternative is to building e Six Nations Public Library attached to the school, thus to provide all of the library functions and training at that site.)

## Original School Feasibility Study

These figures are a bit dated, so engineering firms today might have more updated models. Cost estimating is also difficult as costs are escalating at a fast rate. In 2013, it was estimated that the cost for building a two-story high school made of decorative concrete block as in the U.S. was \$18,813.00-20,592.00 U.S. (including construction and architectural fees). The per square foot cost range from 144.72 to 158.40) (<https://www.rsmeans.com/model-pages/high-school>)

A 2020 estimate for construction costs for building schools in Ontario ranged from \$2,440 to \$2,960 per square meter. (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/972912/-building-costs-ontario-canada-by-type/>)

The cost of a new elementary school in Lakehead Public Schools, Thunderbay, ON in 2018 was estimated at \$30 million. In 2019, Ontario Education Minister Stephen Lecce recently announced a 10-year, \$13 billion investment in the Capital Priorities program, which allows school boards to renovate, fix or build entirely new schools.

### Technology Education

Technology education facilities are very specialized and deliver a range of programs including:

#### A) Large Technology Education Areas

- Transportation
- Construction
- Manufacturing
- Hospitality/Foods/Culinary
- Green Industries

#### B) Small Technology Education Areas

- Communications
- Technological Design
- Computer Engineering
- Cosmetology
- Health Sciences

The large technological education area, based on the typical size of such facilities in the schools surveyed, is proposed to be 2,500 square feet, and the small technological education area is proposed to be 1,510 square feet. Each technological education area includes all specialized storage requirements within the room and all ancillary spaces, but excludes the office area.

The specific equipment, exhaust, ventilation, workspace and safety requirements vary among programs and the Expert Panel determined that technological education facilities could be best addressed when aggregated into two categories based on size. The larger technological education areas have bigger, more specialized equipment, which requires significant exhaust, dust control, specialized storage, and larger ancillary facilities. The smaller technological education areas require access to computers, or more portable equipment with less stringent exhaust requirements.

## **Original School Feasibility Study**

### **Site Requirements**

Due to the specialized nature of the Original School experiential and outdoor education components, having immediate access to the Carolinian forest, creeks and watershed of the Grand River would be ideal. Otherwise, outdoor spaces need to be identified where land-based learning can take place.

Adjacent athletic fields are also required, however the athletic fields behind the Community Centre can also be considered for secondary school use, with required upgrades and additions.

It was suggested that a new Six Nations Public Library be considered as part of the overall educational campus of the Original School.

## Original School Feasibility Study

### 7.0

#### Next Steps

#### Facing the Challenge

“The discussion of the new school has divided parents; whereas some are happy to have their students attending school within their home community, others fear that the substandard education offered in the elementary program will only continue into the secondary system, causing an even greater gap in both workforce and post-secondary achievements,”

Sabrina Redwing Saunders

To move forward on the philosophy and innovations offered by the Original School, the Six Nations Life-Long Learning task Force should consider forming several community-based Secondary School Working Groups need to be formed and mandated with tasks that help move the ideas in this proposal forward, as outlined below. A survey of the previous research reports identified common challenges that we face and must be addressed in the final secondary school plan:

- **Family Engagement** – How do we help families become more involved in constructive engagement for the sake of their children?
- **Attendance** – How can we improve overall attendance?
- **Nutrition** – How can we restore a Rotinonhsón:ni nutrition plan that nourishes the mind, body, and spirit?
- **Special Needs** – What are the range of special needs of the current generation of learners, and how best to address those needs?
- **Language fluency** – What teaching strategies and practices are needed to increase language fluency among all learners?  
Community Increase in membership – Can we estimate how many children will need secondary school services in 10 or 20 years?
- **Mental health** – How do we identify and respond to mental health needs of the learners and teachers?
- **Lack of technology** – How can we improve access to high-speed internet that is reliable and affordable?
- **Capital infrastructure** – What facilities are needed to improve the overall educational experiences in our community?
- **Post-secondary participation** – How do we better prepare our learners to succeed on post-secondary educational opportunities?
- **Lack Central Coordinating Body** – How do we assume authority over education within our community? How do we network more effectively with existing schools?



## Original School Feasibility Study

These obstacles were affirmed in the interviews conducted by Saunders where she found that people were concerned about building a persona that promoted both a safe and healthy lifestyle, as they voiced alarm regarding the Ojibwe youth's disproportional rates of suicide, prostitution, abuse, substance use, diabetes, and HIV. These are real matters that the Original School must deal with and be a counterpoint to the darker side of life many of our youth get trapped in.

Sabrina Saunders noted: "Arguments both for and against an on-reserve secondary school were passionate. Those wanting an on-reserve system stated the racism felt off-reserve, coupled with the lack of ability to track and retain the Six Nations students would be rectified should the community expand the current K-8 system. Those against the argument stated that the current K-8 system is not meeting the needs of the students and Six Nations grade 9's leave the reserve unprepared for the rigor off-reserve. By retaining them in local schools, albeit a possibility that more would graduate, fewer would have the skill-set provided by the surrounding secondary schools. Further, the opportunities for choice in both academic and extracurricular programs would risk absence as one local secondary school for only a few hundred students would have more difficulties attaining the diversified state that the five border town secondary schools have."

### 7.1 Working Group One: Accreditation & Curriculum

What will the Original School offer and how will it be accredited? This Working Group will need to finalize the curriculum offerings of the Original School, taking into consideration our five pathways. The curriculum would need to meet or surpass the current Ontario Course Descriptions and Expectation for Grades 9 to 12. This group will also develop recommendations on accreditation for these courses, to be granted under the authority of the Six Nations, and the collaboration needed to get Post-Secondary Institutions to accept this accreditation. Thus, allowing our graduates to continue their learning. There are several important aspects for this group to consider are:

- What range of courses should be offered?
- What is an alternative to the Academic, Applied and Open level of credits currently being practiced?
- What is the most effective format for teaching Rotinonhsón:ni languages that will be used at the Original School?
- What minimum level of fluency will all graduates of the Original School obtain?
- How shall our course offerings be accredited?

Define the relationship to private schools such as Kawenní:io/Gawęńi:yo Private School and Six Nations Polytechnic Science Technology Engineering Arts and Math Academy (STEAM). "All elements of the natural world are connected physically and spiritually and are to interrelate to each other to benefit the whole. The responsibility falls on the people to peacefully maintain nature's delicate balance to ensure that unborn generations can enjoy what we enjoy today," reads Six Nations Polytechnic STEAM Academy statement of philosophy.

The teaching of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math is a growing concern in Indigenous communities across North America. Locally, Six Nations Polytechnic added a cultural component to that movement to incorporate Rotinonhsón:ni arts, thus STEAM, when they opened such an academy at the Brantford campus several years ago.

## Original School Feasibility Study

The STEAM academy, operated by Six Nations Polytechnic on their Brantford Campus, is another secondary school program open to our youth. Their Mission is "to positively contribute to the well-being of all who share this land and to create and preserve knowledge specific to Ogweho:weh languages and culture through respectful interaction and information sharing with other knowledge systems."

The SNP STEAM Academy is a grade 9-14 technology-rich secondary school where students create their own pathways to high-skilled jobs. Students will begin taking college courses as early as grade 10 and will finish the program in 5 - 6 years with both an Ontario Secondary School Diploma and a post-secondary qualification. The STEAM Academy is on its way to graduating its first cohort of learners.

STEAM Education creates critical thinkers, increases science literacy, and enables the next generation of innovators. The program is open to any incoming grade 9 students. SNP-STEAM Academy is pioneering a new model of education that offers an integrated high school and college curriculum focusing on science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM). Upon graduation from SNP-STEAM Academy, students can choose to continue their studies at college or university or enter the workforce with industry connections and valuable skills.

Should their programs be replicated at the Original School, or, should our students participate in their courses in their facilities?

The Original School has three options in developing a STEAM curriculum and learning opportunities:

- Bus students to the Six Nations Polytechnic Campus for relevant courses.
- Negotiate with Six Nations Polytechnic for replicating their courses at the Original School.
- Create a unique STEAM approach that could serve all of the Original School Pathways.

Currently, secondary students must earn the following compulsory credits to obtain the Ontario Secondary School Diploma:

- 4 credits in English/French (1 credit per grade)
- 3 credits in Mathematics (1 credit in Grade 11 or 12)
- 2 credits in Science
- 1 credit in Canadian history
- 1 credit in Canadian geography
- 1 credit in the Arts
- 1 credit in Health and Physical Education
- 1 credit in French as a second language
- 0.5 credit in Career Studies
- 0.5 credit in Civics

Will the Original School follow this same pattern? We can certainly Indigenize most of those courses and provide relevant content for our learners. It would also require a trilingual approach as our learners will be learning Rotinonhsón:ni languages, as well as English and French. This sounds more complicated than it is. The reality is that a trilingual approach will increase our learners' opportunities for further education and employment.

In addition to the above required courses, off-territory secondary schools require one additional credit from the each of following groups:

## Original School Feasibility Study

### Group 1

- English or French as a second language
- Native language
- Classical or international language
- Social Sciences and the Humanities
- Canadian and World studies
- Guidance and Career Education

### Group 2

- Health and Physical Education
- The Arts
- Business Studies
- French as a second language (In Groups 1, 2, and 3, a maximum of 2 credits in French as a second language can count as compulsory credits, one from group 1 and one from either group 2 or group 3.)
- Cooperative education (A maximum of 2 credits in cooperative education can count as compulsory credits.)

### Group 3

- Science (grade 11 or 12)
- Technological education
- French as a second language
- Computer skills
- Cooperative education

Currently taking the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) is a requirement for secondary students off-territory. The assessment is generally administered to Grade 10 students every March and is based on the curriculum expectations up to the end of Grade 9. The Original School curriculum must address this matter.

Forty hours of community service outside of regular school hours are also currently required to graduate with an Ontario Secondary School Diploma. This will be an important component of the Original School experience and engaging our learners in community development through summer experiences in Grade 4-9-12. The Original School will have to negotiate with community agencies to identify a list of acceptable activities.

### **7.2 Working Group Two: Teacher Training**

What new skills will Original School teachers need and how will this training be provided? Secondary teachers must be adequately trained in the new style of education that we propose. Teachers are more like mentors as opposed to an authority figure.

How will teachers and administrators adopt a new teaching philosophy? The Original School will require a different attitude and philosophy toward teaching and this Working Group will map out a two-year teacher preparedness plan to ensure that all the teachers at the Original School will have the necessary

## Original School Feasibility Study

skills. What skills will the teachers at the Original School need to mentor students more effectively? Working with Six Nations Polytechnic, appropriate Additional Qualifications Courses could be developed and offered locally for potential teachers at the Original School. Those courses would require special development and syllabi to ensure that the philosophy and values of the Original School are properly addressed through this training.

Tim Johnson (Grand River Mohawk), program consultant, has developed a Living History program through the Landscape of Nations 360° Indigenous Education Project. He has organized educators, Indigenous historians, and various specialists to develop a comprehensive learning strategy to identify key understandings of Indigenous history and culture.<sup>53</sup> This work identifies key concepts on culture, continuity and change, places and environments, identity, groups and institutions, authority and governance, production and distribution, nature science, technology and society, global connections, civic ideals and practices, all from an Indigenous perspective and in alignment with the secondary school expectations.

This could serve as a core curriculum plan for the Original School. In addition, Johnson has designed and conducted teacher training sessions and historic site learning opportunities that demonstrate how to connect our teachers and learners to the places that have been historically and culturally significant to our people. This draws upon previous work done by Jake Thomas, Norma Jacobs and Bonnie Whitlow known as the Peacemaker's Journey, taking Six Nations people on a field trip to retrace the steps of the Peacemaker and learn about the Great Law of Peace.

Local artist and educator Elizabeth Doxtator helped develop *Exploring the Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession through Rotinonhsyón:ni Art*.<sup>54</sup> The standards are: integrity, care, respect and trust. As a starting point, teachers at the Original School will develop an educational strategy based upon these ethical standards.

Integrity: "Corn has another teaching that is intrinsic to integrity. The individual corn seeds grow on the cob and each seed is protected by the cornhusk. It protects the integrity of each individual seed as they grow, and has every year for thousands of years. . . Honesty, and moral action: That husk has an important, vital responsibility. Protecting the integrity of each seed on each cob, on every stalk, in each field, every season for too many seasons to count, and continues to teach us about the importance of protecting the integrity of everyone and everything that is placed in our care."

Care: "Basket makers choose and prepare the splints that are best for each type of basket. They carefully organize them and weave them together to create the distinct basket patterns. Throughout this process is also woven the history of our connection to the earth and can be compared to the social structure of each village. These practices of acceptance, kindness and compassion are done with the best interest of our future generations in mind. . . In the most basic terms, we can blend our tools with care, as we walk forward, together."

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<sup>53</sup> Landscape of Nations 360, Indigenous Education Initiative, A Framework for Essential Understandings about Indigenous Peoples of the Niagara Region, 2020.

<sup>54</sup> A Rotinonhsyón:ni Representation of the Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession, Ontario College of Teachers, 2019

## Original School Feasibility Study

Respect: “Within this framework Peace is defined as a healthy mind and a healthy body. These are attached to emotional wellness and cognitive development. Power is defined as unity. Unity honours human dignity and cultural values. The Good-Mind is sometimes described as Righteousness. This component includes compassion and fairness, which can also be called social justice.”

Trust: “As a teaching standard, it is imperative that all parties are treated with fairness and honesty. [Looking at the relationship of the Moon and Corn] Within these relationships, their individual roles are predictable and reliable. This is how trust is built.

### 7.3 Working Group Three: Outdoor Education

How can hands-on learning and outdoor education be folded into the curriculum? This Working Group will develop the overall strategy for implementing an active land-based, experiential learning process, based upon Rotinonhsón:ni cultural and ecological knowledge, and define the skills necessary for the instructors/mentors of this program. What types of outdoor experiences will provide the desired results? If training is needed, the Teacher Training Working group will address those matters. They will define the full range of outdoor activities to be offered through the Original School. The Working Group would identify specific sites at Six Nations of the Grand River that would be part of this plan, as well as sites within 70 km radius of the community.

This group will examine Wisahkotewinowak Gardens at the University of Guelph as a model for the growing and distribution of crops by Indigenous students, while exploring innovative land-based education and practices across generations.

The working group will also consider the development of Cross-Cultural Science and Technology Curriculum as an adjunct to outdoor education. Science is often viewed as a sub-culture of Western culture that often discounts Indigenous knowledge. However, some scientists are beginning to see value in adding Indigenous knowledge to scientific processes. What is needed is a deeper appreciation for Rotinonhsón:ni science – an understanding of how nature works and how that reality impacts on our relationship to nature. Within that relationship a new approach to ecological systems can be incorporated into the curriculum. Western science will not be discounted. By experiencing both western and Rotinonhsón:ni science, a deeper sense of connection can be revealed.

The Akwesasne Task Force on the Environment (ATFE) and the Haudenosaunee Task Force on the Environment have developed strategies and teaching tools (Holistic risk-based environmental decision making) that this working group could consider. "The mission of the Akwesasne Task Force on the Environment is to, conserve, preserve, protect, and restore the environment, natural and cultural resources within the Mohawk territory of Akwesasne in order to promote the health and survival of the sacred web of life for future generations and to fulfill our responsibilities to the natural world as our Creator instructed." ATFE developed Protocol for Review of Environmental and Scientific Research Proposals. This protocol can be employed in some of the outdoor education learning/research opportunities that are culturally sensitive and fosters inclusion and active participation of all community members.

Such protocols can help to put life skills on the land into a broader context and allow our learners to employ a variety of intellectual tools in a search for a meaningful connection to the land, and to explore both scientific and traditional knowledge strategies to protect, enhance and preserve local ecosystems.

## Original School Feasibility Study

### 7.4 Working Group Four: Facility and Educational Infrastructure

What kind of facility and outdoor education facilities will be needed? The Original School will have a unique architectural footprint and this Working Group will conduct design charettes to create the conceptual design of the school, adjacent facilities and outdoor education infrastructure. Working with architects, engineers, school planners, educators, artists, parents, elders and students, these series of design charettes will produce the conceptual plan that would then be submitted to community engagement and input. An important consideration will be the development of world class recreational facilities for the use of the school and the community. Once the conceptual plan is adopted, then an architectural/engineering firm could be hired to produce the final design, cost estimates and bid documents. Site location for the school will also be addressed by this group.

### 7.5 Working Group Five: Governance & Community Involvement

“If tomorrow, we were asked by what power or authority we exercise our jurisdiction over education, hopefully our answer will be that it is through the same power by which we lay rightful claim to our ancestral lands and governments - by right of our sovereign title and authority.”

Diane Longboat (Mohawk), 1986 <sup>55</sup>

How will the Six Nations community assume responsibility for the Original School? How do we gain community support and input in ongoing basis? This Working Group will research and develop a governing model for the Original School to ensure that the community is actively involved in the overall governance of the school. Will we need our own Board of Education? What lessons have we learned about school governance This may take a larger discussion about the long-term administration of all public schools in the community. This group will look at working models in other Rotinonhsón:ni and Indigenous communities, as they draft a governance approach that is unique to our community. This plan would also have a component for increasing the involvement of parents, culture bearers, elders, artists, community scholars and community advocates on an ongoing basis.

There is growing frustration within our community about educational governance. The Community of Six Nations must assume authority and responsibility for the education of our children. Parents are the critical player and essential partners in the education of their children. Parents, community elders, cultural specialists, artists, and fluent language speakers will be a daily part of life at the Original School. Most importantly, parents have to be supported by being better equipped to help children make good choices. Parents will play a critical role in ensuring their children have what they need to stay and succeed in school.

Six Nations had a school board from 1878–1933. It was the first Indigenous school board in Ontario. In 1878, after a disagreement between the Six Nations Council and the New England Company, which funded and managed the Mohawk Institute and day schools, over the costs of maintaining the schools, the Six Nations School Board was founded. It was comprised of three community members, three from the New England Company, one Wesleyan missionary and one superintendent of Indian Affairs.

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<sup>55</sup> Diane Longboat and Eric Johnson, “Sovereignty, Jurisdiction and Guiding Principles in Aboriginal Education in Canada, *The Canadian Journal Of Native Studies*, VI 1 (1986)

## Original School Feasibility Study

Nine schools were operated by the New England Company, two by the Wesleyan Methodists, and two by the community itself, financed by Six Nations funds. Only about one third of the school age population was attending school.

The first priorities of the School Board were to improve the school facilities, hire better trained teachers, improve curriculum and improve school attendance. By 1897, five new school houses were built, three improved and re-furnished, and by 1900, four more school houses had been built and two others improved.

The Board demanded that they be allowed to teach the regular Ontario Programme of Studies, and not the separate curriculum designed for —Indian Schools. (Jamieson, History of Six Nations Education) The Six Nations Chiefs wanted the introduction of the new Ontario curriculum, including Botany, Book-keeping, English Poetical literature, English Rhetoric, French language, Canadian History since 1841, Latin, Greek, Physiology and temperance.<sup>56</sup> By 1924, all of the teachers employed at Six Nations possessed a Normal School Certificate. There was also a Six Nations Teacher's Organization.

The Original School seeks to engage the whole child. Secondary education must address the diversity of learning styles and career aspiration of our children. The Original School is about choice. A wide variety of options will be offered. Parents and students will be making critical choices along the way, so they will be empowered with the information and perspectives they need to pick the right options. Together, the parents and the student will shape the education experiences that will impact on lifelong learning and career choices. Learners will have more options to select their individual preference on subjects to study, skills to master, and ideas to explore.

### *Model #1: Akwesasne*

The Ahkwešāhsne Mohawk Board of Education (AMBE) was created by a Mohawk Council Resolution in 1985, which allowed it to take full control of the education system in 1987 from the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). It is the governing body of the school system, with the power vested in them by the voters of the Akwesasne community and under the jurisdiction of the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne.

The organization of AMBE is modeled on the provincial system, with elected board members, and the governance structure is based on provincial, federal, and Mohawk Council of Akwesasne laws and by-laws. Two members from each district for a total of six members, elected for a three year staggered term, all which comprise the Board. Board policies can be found at [http://www.ambe.ca/governance/our\\_policies](http://www.ambe.ca/governance/our_policies)

The Akwesasne Mohawk Board of Education is an elected board composed of nine members with three from each of the three districts in Akwesasne. Along with the Director of Education and staff, Board of Education members are responsible for oversight of the planning, policy, finance, staffing, evaluation, student transportation and community relations within the jurisdiction of the Board. The AMBE holds public meetings and is responsible for community relations. Formal parent committees function in each

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<sup>56</sup> Abate, W.A., "Iroquois Control of Iroquois Education: a Case Study of the Iroquois of the Grand River Valley in Ontario," Canada, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Toronto, 1985.

## Original School Feasibility Study

of the AMBE's three districts to assist with planning social events and fund raising activities. The parent committees, unlike the AMBE, are not involved with matters of school business.<sup>1</sup>

The Akwesasne Mohawk Board of Education has developed a variety of partnerships with local community organizations. One partnership is with the Ronathahonni Cultural Centre. The mandate of the centre is to educate the public about the culture, history, and traditions of the Rotinonhsón:ni people. The centre includes administrative offices, a museum, library and bookstore. AMBE teachers regularly invite Ronathohonni staff to their classrooms to share information about Mohawk culture and history.

Preservation of Ahkwesáhsró:non Culture and Kanien'keha Language Policy:

- The Board actively seeks to preserve, revitalize, promote and protect Ahkwesáhsró:non culture and Kanien'keha language.
- The Board is guided by the Hotinonshon:ni principle of seven generations. This principle will ensure that the Board considers the effect decisions today regarding Ahkwesáhsró:non culture and Kanien'keha language will have on descendants seven generations into the future.
- The Board ensures our Kanien'keha birthright is transmitted through our educational system and is consistent with Hotinonshon:ni teachings.
- The Board supports the Akwesáhsne Mohawk Board of Education's participation in local, provincial and federal indigenous programs, initiatives and committees in order to identify strengths, challenges, opportunities and lived experiences of our students and staff.
- The Board believes that culture is important for shaping social relationships, determining how we make sense of the world and our place in it, and shaping our everyday actions and experiences in society. Therefore, having a deep understanding of our culture and being fluent in our language will increase the pride in our identity and hope for the future of our students and community.
- The Board acknowledges that understanding our culture is an asset, and our students, through education, must be familiar with the contributions we have made towards humanity. The contributions we have made can then be used to cultivate economic opportunities in areas leading to an improvement in the quality of our students' lives and the Akwesasne Community as a whole.
- Areas that should be considered include, but are not limited to: academics (language, mathematics, and technology), sciences (medicinal, environmental, and nutritional), social sciences, (geography, history and economics), arts (dance, music, visual, crafts), mindfulness (philosophy, beliefs, spirituality), and governance (laws, regulations, processes and services).
- The Board believes in the critical role culture plays in the creation of material and non-material forms of knowledge and recognizes that the knowledge produced by our community has benefited humanity.
- The Board also recognizes that, while it is important to preserve, revitalize, promote and protect our culture and language, it is also important to recognize and respect the uniqueness of other cultures, and value cultural diversity among First Nations and global communities.
- The Board believes and respects the uniqueness of each culture, recognizing that celebrating cultural diversity strengthens our society by increasing empathy and dialogue, which are the foundation for human peace and progress.



## Original School Feasibility Study

- Therefore, the Board strongly supports the goal of ensuring our students become thoughtful engaged global citizens and leaders through their understanding of the role and importance of our Ahkwesáhsró:non culture and language, as well as that of others.
- The Board considers education as a partnership and a shared responsibility among students, parents/guardians, staff, the Akwesasne Community and the Board with the guidance of our Knowledge Keepers and Elders.
- The Board seeks innovative ways to integrate traditional teachings into our current education system in order to provide our students with the skills they need to thrive in the modern world along with a firm knowledge of and respect for the past.
- The Board strongly believes that our curriculum must be reflective of a 21st century curriculum, which successfully harmonizes a deep understanding of Ahkwesáhsró:non culture and, Kanien'keha language, while taking into consideration the principles of cultural diversity.
- The Board supports a dual language curriculum which will result in increased economic opportunities for students leading to a higher quality of life. Kanien'keha, our traditional language, will allow students to access the wisdom of our Ahkwesáhsró:non culture and Hotinonshon:ni traditions, while English will enable our students to participate fully on the world stage.
- The Board ensures that Mohawk language expert(s) are hired to prepare curriculum, train fluent speakers to be immersion teachers, and train non-fluent teachers to be speakers. Mohawk language experts will also develop separate curriculum and programs for the community through continuing education.
- The Board in its decisions will consistently consider Ahkwesáhsró:non culture and Kanien'keha language, as well as, the Hotinonshon:ni principle of seven generations, taking into consideration the longer-term impact on students, parents/guardians, staff and Akwesasne Community.
- Confirm that knowledges contributed by our people to humanity have been included in the curriculum and shared with the community, including: academics (language, mathematics, technology), sciences (medicinal, environmental, nutritional), social sciences (geography, history and economics), arts (dance, music, visual, crafts), mindfulness (philosophy, beliefs, spirituality) and governance (laws, regulations, processes and services) amongst others
- Support the Ahkwesáhsró:non culture and Kanien'keha language as a mandatory course for all students attending our schools and centres, by:
  - Training fluent speakers to be immersion teachers; o Training non-fluent teachers to be speakers; and
  - Designing a life-long learning curriculum for students and community members.
- Promote Ahkwesáhsró:non culture and Kanien'keha language within the curriculum, special school/centre events and the community.
- Expand Board Members knowledge related to how our people have contributed towards development of humanity through: academics (language, mathematics, technology), sciences (medicinal, environmental, nutritional), social sciences (geography, history and economics), arts (dance, music, visual, crafts), mindfulness (philosophy, beliefs, spirituality) and governance (laws, regulations, processes and services) amongst other areas of knowledge.

## Original School Feasibility Study

The Akwesasne Mohawk Board of Education collaborates closely with several partners to ensure a strong relationship between the school and the community. The gymnasiums at the schools and other facilities are shared for various community activities. In fact, the schools are also designated emergency shelters should the need arise.

AMBE Head Start Program that meets monthly and provides parents the opportunity to participate in program decision making. Those parents who have children in the program are required to be available for home visits from Head Start staff in order for them to jointly design and monitor the IEP plans for their children. Parents who choose to participate are also required to attend workshops covering such topics as couple communication, Mohawk language, child development, etc. The impacts of these early interventions and training have had significant impacts in terms of school readiness scores and parental/teacher satisfaction rates.

### *Model #2: Kahnawake*

Kahnawake has a unique model for their parent-school partnership. Each school (there are 2 elementary schools and 1 secondary school) has an in-school parent committee. There are between 6 to 12 parents on each of these committees. The committees work with school staff to provide support to programs and with fundraising types of activities. Two parents from each of these committees are appointed to the Combined School(s) Committee of the Kahnawake Education System. The Combined School(s) Committee of the Kahnawake Education System is comprised of 12 members: two from each school, one representative from each longhouse and four members at large who are elected parents by the General Assembly.

This Committee is responsible for school governance from pre-school to post-graduate studies and is responsible for planning, monitoring and supervising all aspects of school governance. The Committee has been in operation since 1978. Other partnerships between the school and community include the:

- Band Council: two chiefs who are assigned the Education portfolio
- Relationship with the New Frontier School Board
- Cultural centre: for language programs, CDs, TV programs etc.
- First Nations Technical Institute
- Community Services programs
- Health programs through the health centre and hospital
- Economic Development in-house training
- Vocational and career training
- In-house teacher training in partnership with McGill University
- Theatre programs in summer for students.

The Kahnawà:ke Education Responsibility Act officially adopted under the authority of the Kahnawà:ke Combined Schools Committee (KCSC) on May 11, 2000 (KEC Resolution # KEC 99-2000-01).

RECOGNITION - All KCSC legislation, policies and procedures have been created to honor the work of parents and community members who have shown exceptional courage, dedication and leadership with respect to the education of the children of Kahnawà:ke. (See Appendix 1, History of Education in Kahnawà:ke)

## Original School Feasibility Study

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY - The Kahnawà:ke Education System was established by parents of Kahnawà:ke who possessed “the ability, competency, love and respect needed to successfully carry out the vision of our forefathers,” stated L. Delormier. The Kahnawà:ke Education System remains a “grass roots” organization founded for and by the parents.

### 7.6 Working Group Six: Nutrition and Whole Health

“Healthy relationship principles of respect, equality, trust and safety provide youth with a sense of security, stability, value, belonging, and resiliency” stated Rachel Bomberry, in her 2018 Master Thesis.<sup>57</sup> She examined the function of making corn husk dolls as a way to promote health awareness in female youth living at Grand River. Her conclusions are that in order to have our youth exercise more control over their health, the youth must gain a sense of belonging to the community, create respectful relationships and a connection to the land.

We have learned that good nutrition impacts on our ability to learn and retain knowledge. We have also learned that the Good Mind requires a healthy body and a healthy spirit. This Working Group will examine three important aspects of the Original School:

- How can we demonstrate the validity of our teachings through a comprehensive food system based upon Rotinonhsón:ni nutrition?
- How can daily food needs become part of our curriculum offerings?
- How can the holistic health needs of the learners, staff and faculty be best addressed at the school?
- How will the Original School address the emotional angst, bullying and mental health issues of future students?

### 7.7 Working Group Seven: Budgets and Fund-Raising

How do we afford the Original School? This group will research funding options of the capital costs of the Original School as well as the ongoing operational costs. The costs will be significant, and we need to seek creative ways of financing the Original School. This group will examine the current funding mechanism for off-reserve educational services, identify new sources of funding, and develop the overall operating budget for the Original School.

How do we afford the Original School? This group will research funding options of the capital costs of the Original School as well as the ongoing operational costs. The costs will be significant, and we need to seek creative ways of financing the Original School. This group will examine the current funding mechanism for off-reserve educational services, identify new sources of funding, and develop the overall operating budget for the Original School.

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<sup>57</sup> Bomberry, Rachel, “Promoting Health with Female Youth Living On Six Nations Reserve NO. 40.” A Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Public Health, McMaster University, 2018.

## 8.0

### Closing Remarks

“When I was at the residential school they raised me their way. Now you have a chance to raise your children your way.”

Calvin Miller, 1991<sup>58</sup>

In 1991 Mohawk Institute survivor Calvin Miller told a community gathering that it was time for Six Nations to put aside their political and religious differences and start to work together for the sake of the future and take over the responsibility of education on the territory. Almost 30 years later, an entire generation, we are still talking about it.

Think of how many children have dropped out or flunked out of school since then. Think of how many children failed to learn the knowledge of their ancestors. Think of how many never found their true self here in their home community. Their remains only one question: How much longer do we want that to continue?

Our report suggests a radical plan to move forward. It is a different kind of school that we propose. A different vision and philosophy about how we engage and inspire our young people. It is about nation building.

This does not have to be the final plan that the community adopts. However, we need, for the sake of our children, to have the courage to say that they matter more than anything and do as Calvin Miller suggests. If we can come to one mind that it is time for a secondary school here on the territory, we can move toward the future in unity. In doing so we will demonstrate to our children that despite the diversity and factionalism in our community, we have faith in our youth and see them as important players in the future of Six Nations, as a community and as a nation. It is time to come to one mind that our community needs to stop exporting our children to schools that are failing them and take the responsibility for their education here in their home community.

It is time to make this real.

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<sup>58</sup> "Report Calls for New Treaty on Education for Six Nations," Brantford Expositor, 1991

## Original School Feasibility Study

### 9.0 Original School Feasibility Study Project Team

Team Lead: RICHARD HILL

Rick has been an important contributor to education at Six Nations through his work at Six Nations Polytechnic to build the Indigenous Knowledge Centre. He has also taught at SNP, Mohawk College, and McMaster University. He had been an Assistant Professor in Native American Studies at the SUNY Buffalo for two decades. He has experience in planning and constructing Indigenous cultural instructions, conducting master planning for museums and cultural centres; conducting strategic planning exercises; developing professional training curriculum in child welfare and community justice; and currently serves as Indigenous Initiatives Specialist at Mohawk College. In recognition of his achievements, both McMaster University and University of Guelph awarded Rick an Honorary Doctor of Laws Degrees.

JOSHUA DOCKSTATOR

Joshua has dedicated his life to addressing the needs of the Indigenous community through increasing educational opportunities and seeking justice for people in need. He has extensive experience in Indigenous student services at McMaster University and as coordinator of the Nya Weh youth program at Sir John A. Macdonald Secondary School in Hamilton. He has served as Manager – Indigenous Education, Mohawk College, Hamilton, ON; Lead, Southwestern Ontario, National Centre for Collaboration Indigenous Education (and assisted Kawenni:io/Gaweni:yo to develop teacher resources for literacy learning expectations; Reconciliation Lead, Catholic Children’s Aid Society of Hamilton, Hamilton, ON; Vice President, John Howard Society of Hamilton, Board of Directors; Chair, Hamilton CAS and CCAS Indigenous Child Welfare Collaborative; and City of Hamilton Urban Indigenous Strategy Steering Committee.

TIM JOHNSON

Tim brings many years of educational and communication management experiences. A Mohawk from Grand River, he has served as Assistant Director for Museum Programs at the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, and editor of Indian Country Today, a national newspaper.

Most recently, Tim has spearheaded the award-winning Landscape of Nations Native Allies Project to build a lasting memorial and reconciliation monument to bring awareness of the contribution of the Indigenous Peoples of Canada in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and chaired a roundtable of educators and historians to produce the Landscape of Nations 360o – National Education Initiative - Essential Understandings. He is also the artistic director of the Great Niagara Escarpment Indigenous Cultural Map project with Plenty Canada, and artistic producer of Celebration of Nations, an annual Indigenous arts festival in St. Catharines.

Dr. SUSAN HILL

Susan is the director of Indigenous Studies at the University of Toronto and has served the Six Nations educational community for two decades. She has a great awareness of the needs of Indigenous learners and creative solutions to address those needs more effectively. She obtained her PhD. In Indigenous Studies from Trent University and studied Cayuga and Mohawk languages at Onkwawenna Kentyohkwa and Grand River Employment and Training. Susan has been the recipient of several research grants from

## Original School Feasibility Study

the Social Science & Humanities Research Council of Canada. One of her research interests has been to expand academic understanding of Indigenous thought and knowledge while at the same time, making that intellectual heritage make more sense in contemporary lives of Indigenous peoples.

### CHANDRA MARACLE

Chandra Maracle is mother of four daughters. She was a Cultural Resource Specialist at the Native American Magnet School in Buffalo, NY. Served as Co-Founder of the Indigenous Women's Initiatives. She is also co-founder and Nutrition Motivator at Skaronhyaseko:wa Tyohterakentko:wa Tsi Yontaweya'tahkwa/Everlasting Tree School at Six Nations and founder of Kakhwa'on:we/Real People Eat Real Food. She was a collaborator on the Healthy Roots committee and developed the Rotinonhsón:ni Food Guide for the Community Challenge. Chandra is a collaborator on the Earth To Tables Legacies Project and a PhD student in the Faculty of Environment and Urban Change at York University. She lives at Six Nations of the Grand River Territory.

### NATHAN TIDRIDGE

Nathan is an innovative, engaging high school teacher in Civics, Canadian and World History and Indigenous Studies for Waterdown High School who has been awarded the Premier's Award for Teaching Excellence; the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012; Charles Baillie Award for Excellence in Secondary Education; and the Meritorious Service Medal from the Governor General in 2017. He also serves on the Prince's charities Canada Advisory Council and the Ontario Heritage Trust. He is the first honorary fellow of the United Loyalist Association of Canada, recognizing his work to build bridges between the Crown and the Indigenous peoples. Nathan was recently awarded the 2020 Governor General's Award for Excellence in Teaching History.

## Original School Feasibility Study

### 10.0 Appendices

#### 10.1 Appendix I: Need Clarified: The Highlights of Community Reports on Education

“In 2001, Six Nations released an education report which outlined the current status of the students and the education system. This was part of a larger feasibility study of Band ownership and management of the district from INAC. Since that date, no movement in either direction has occurred towards the local control of education. Further, no documentation has been released stating the district has moved from the bottom one-third percentile of the province,” Sabrina Redwing- Saunders (Mohawk), 2005.

1988-94: Community Education Project (CEP) stated: “we are responsible for children and future generations; children need education; education can rebuild our community; community controls type/quality of education; our people are capable of operating our education system; if we don’t control education, someone else will.” The Project was first headed by Rebecca Jamieson (Tuscarora), later headed by Claudine VanEvery-Albert (Mohawk).

1991: Community Education Project was presented at an education conference entitled “Education

1991: Our Decision or Theirs?” The three-year study, headed by Rebecca Jamieson, recommended that the Rotinonhsón:ni Confederacy, not the Elected Band Council, should sign a new treaty with the federal government to regain control over education.

1994: Minutes of the Six Nations Education Board show that the community had expressed a desire for a Treaty Based Agreement on education. The Elected Council drafted a Memorandum of Understanding to transfer authority over education at Six Nations to a newly formed Six Nations Education Board.

However, the Home and School Association of I.L. Thomas School objected saying that they were not adequately consulted. (*Teka*, Feb 4, 1994)

2000-2001: Bomcor and Associates found that school attendance was poor, test scores were below average, some staff were not qualified, no education system was in place, there was a need to commission a local school board, develop policies and procedures, and a superintendent and school consultants were needed and should be hired. Specific concerns listed within this executive summary include the fact that Six Nations provincial testing scores fell in the bottom 1/3 of provincial schools of Ontario with many scores ranking so low they had to be thrown out of provincial reports. These test scores were considered a direct attribute of the heightened dropout rates of on-reserve students from off-reserve secondary schools.

Zinga, Bomberry, Bennett & The Student Success Consortium agreed that a good teacher gets to know the student, makes the curriculum interesting and shows respect. Students were motivated by a desire for a good education leading to a good job, and they continued to need someone to care about them and encourage them. Although the executive summary did not spell out the specifics of why Council and the people of Six Nations were being recommended against taking on the management of the education system, they did discuss the attainment gap and ranking of the educational system against others in the province.

2001 to 2005: Six Nations Education Commission (SNEC) identified that language and culture were of high priority to the Six Nations community. More professional development for teachers and a partnership with the Grand Erie District School Board was of high importance.

## Original School Feasibility Study

2002: Interim Six Nations Education Authority draws together the Secondary education work completed by the Secondary Education Research Project (SERP) Phases One, Two and Three, and the work completed by the Community Education Project (CEP) and the Six Nations Education Board. The objective of the Interim Six Nations Education Authority Working Group is to "carry out the research necessary and make recommendations for quality education for Six Nations through local authority and control," constituted under the Six Nations Council Education Committee's Terms of Reference to "Set up an interim Six Nations Education Authority board as a steering committee to prepare a comprehensive plan for local/band control of education."

Phase One of the Secondary Education Research Project took place in 1997 and was a Needs Assessment to address Six Nations' issues related to Ontario Secondary School Reform. The Activities for SERP Phase One were:

- to undertake research to determine the current and emerging education issues that have an impact on secondary education for Six Nations students, and,
- to research, develop and make recommendations for models of improved future delivery of secondary education services for Six Nations students. The outcome of Phase One's research was that the community gave direction to establish a Six Nations High School and five models for such a high school were identified.

SERP Phase Two undertook specific research related to the development of a Six Nations High School. The outcome of the research for this phase combined the strengths of all five models as identified and re-developed them into one model known as a Stand Alone Facility. This research also began preliminary investigations into jurisdictional, educational, and economic considerations for building a secondary school at Six Nations.

The purpose of SERP Phase Three was to begin the work to start a secondary school at Six Nations. During Phase Three a SERP office was established, a Secondary Education Community Work Group was constituted and a large curriculum development project for grades 9 and 10 was completed. At the end of Phase Three on September 13, 2002 the secondary education work was to be rolled into the work of the Interim Six Nations Education Authority Working Group.

2002: BOMCOR Associates of Six Nation conducted a study to:

- identify strengths and areas for improvement;
- identify and prioritize the goals and requirements of the education program to meet student needs; and,
- provide a practical implementation guide for possible change and recommendations.

The recommendations of this study were:

- Elected Band Council, through its organizational protocol, establish an interim community based Six Nations elementary education authority to facilitate the revitalization of elementary education service at Six Nations.
- Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) be developed for an education authority, to identify the roles and responsibilities of both parties.



## Original School Feasibility Study

- INAC to provide immediate funding for the Operation and Maintenance of an education authority and the staffing of a Superintendent position for the Elementary schools. Budget to be established and developed by the Education Authority.
- Elected Band Council facilitate a decision-making process to decide on the issue of assuming the administration of Elementary services in the Six Nations community.

**2002** – Linda Staats was given the Education Portfolio of the Six Nations Elected Council and created a working group to conduct research and develop a comprehensive plan and make recommendations for quality education for Six Nations through local authority and control which then became the mandate of the Interim Six Nations Education Authority Working Group who conducted another study:

- review all information and research prepared by the previous Six Nations Education Board (SNEB) to determine what can be revised and what needs to be developed for implementation of a functional Six Nations Education Authority.
- develop a questionnaire and research tool for data collection of pros and cons of other First Nation education authorities.
- develop a questionnaire for research tool for community data collection.
- implement data gathering information into report and recommendations for decision-making.
- develop a workplan and budget for Phase Two: Implementation State of Assuming Authority of Elementary and Secondary Education at Six Nations of the Grand River Territory.

TEWATATIS Education Consultants owned by Claudine VanEvery-Albert was hired to complete these tasks.

**1998-2010:** GRPSEO reports a graduation rate for 1998-2010 academic years of 770 university and 673 College diplomas. The average for that period was only 17.6% and did not improved very much in 13 years.

**2003-04:** Sabrina Redwing-Saunders' study produced a Curriculum Model that included survey research collected from 101 Rotinonhsón:ni students across Southern Ontario. In addition, one Western New York University was included in the survey with respondents enrolled between the years of 1993-1999 and 2003-04. Finally, 29 educator surveys were collected from Southern Ontario-based Rotinonhsón:ni people who worked in various areas of education including teachers, administrators, researchers, counselors, and traditional knowledge holders/elders. Students were asked, "If you could design your own school or learning environment, what would be the most important factor?"

Respondents described the five main areas as:

- *relevance* to the learner and real life
- *inclusion* of practical and hands-on learning
- *respect* for individual learners in their environment
- *community involvement*
- *up-to-date materials and resources.*

The students wanted respect in place of racism. They also felt that the attitudes and actions of the non-community schools were outdated and not reflective of Rotinonhsón:ni realities. Saunders concluded that where there is no trust, there can be no real sharing, which stifles constructive relationships.

## Original School Feasibility Study

2012: Education Summit: At a gathering of educators and concerned Six Nation citizens, the following needs were identified:

- Assess the quality of the present education program
- Concern for loss of language and culture
- The need for additional student support
- The need for increased involvement of parents
- The need for more support for teachers
- Requirements to update educational data and evaluation
- The need for an Education Board

**2015 - Donna Cona Consulting Report.** The project reviewed the on-territory schools to assess their performance. It identified the need for increase in Rotinohsón:ni languages, culture, and values instruction. Federally-managed on-territory schools were achieving appropriate levels in math, reading, and writing in the primary grades. This project resulted in the identification of the following needs:

- Build organizational capacity
- Build rationale for transferring education to community
- Conduct Facilities review
- Define Staffing needs
- Ensure Community focus
- Design and create a school board/authority
- Negotiations with funders
- Responsibilities of federal agencies to be clarified.

2016 Six Nations Path to Educational Freedom, Return to a Life in Balance through Education report by Luanne Hill presented to Six Nations Elected Council. There were three phases:

- Phase 1 – historical research on previous endeavors to recover control of education including Community Education Project, EE Hobbs Evaluation, Education Commission Project, BomCor Evaluation, Indian Act, Wampum Belt and treaty agreements.
- Phase 2 – Research of current documents including AANDC School Review, Education Summit, First Nations Education Law, Canadian Council of Ministers of Education and AANDC Funding agreements
- Phase 3 – build an Education Plan and recommendations based on above information

Options recommended:

1. leave as is and continue to have INAC manage education
2. recover education and manage funding and services
3. Partner with a third party to manage education funding and services

### 2019 Life-Long Learning Task Force

The task force surveyed the community and documented the following responses on what education at Six Nations should look like:

- 157 said – Culture/Land-Based Learning were important; including real history; and connect with community elders.

## Original School Feasibility Study

- 104 said – Student-Centered Individual Programs are needed; one-on-one mentoring; and special needs should be addressed.
- 45 said - Life Skills are important; teaching learners to be more self-reliant; increased food security for our families and community.
- 31 said – Recommended that school should be academically challenging; with attention to math and science; there is a need to increase teacher training.

It is interesting that among those responding, culture and land-based learning rate much higher than math and science. However, these do not need to be mutually exclusive. Science and math can be taught in more culturally congruent ways, and culture and land-based learning have significant math and science components.

All of these reports set the stage for our proposal. We have conducted research into the current state, various teaching strategies, reflections and findings by Rotinonhsón:ni scholars, and the thoughtful ideas shared in the various community consultations. It is our hope that no matter where you fall on the spectrum of diversity at the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory, you will see some of your aspirations for education reflected in this plan.

### **10.2 Appendix II - Future Employment Opportunities in Arts and Culture identified by Cultural Human Resources Council, Ottawa**

- Audio-Visual Technician
- Archaeologist: Excavates, researches and reports on artifacts.
- Archivist: Acquires, arranges and describes records of historical significance.
- Artistic director: Auditions and selects performers.
- Audio technician: Provides all audio requirements for exhibits. Lighting technician: Appropriately lights exhibits.
- Booking agent: Hires festival performers on contract.
- Box office manager: Sells tickets to the general public.
- Choreographer: Provides vision and direction to dancers.
- Collections manager / registrar: Catalogues and cares for artifacts and coordinates shipping and receiving.
- Conservation architect: Plans the treatment — restoration, rehabilitation, etc. — of a heritage site or building.
- Conservation landscape architect: Plans the treatment of an historic landscape or develops a landscape suitable for the site's history.
- Conservation engineer: Oversees the physical building or repair — mechanical, electrical, etc. — involved in preserving an historical site.
- Conservator: Restores, preserves and ensures the safety of artifacts.
- Costume designer: Designs period costumes for exhibits.
- Costume seamstress: Sews period costumes for exhibits.
- Curator: Acquires, researches and writes about artifacts and develops exhibits.
- Craftsperson: Creates hand-crafted items for sale.
- Creative Writer/Poet/Word Artist
- Dance Artist/Performer

## Original School Feasibility Study

- Delivery / transportation assistant: Ensures the safe arrival of all exhibit elements.
- Digital Art / Designer
- Digital Producer
- Digital Camera person
- Educator / public programmer: Organizes special events for the public.
- Education coordinator: Organizes and delivers programming to schools and the general public.
- Emergency measures coordinator: Handles public safety and security.
- Environmental crew member: Helps with the recycling program and ensures site is clean
- Exhibition developer: Plans and develops the overall design of an exhibit.
- Exhibit designer: Conceives and designs the exhibit.
- Exhibit marketer: Promotes the exhibit to the public.
- Exhibition production coordinator: Oversees the production and construction schedules of exhibits.
- Festival/fair director; Oversees the event and handles all administrative details.
- Graphic artist: Designs visual elements of exhibits.
- Guide / interpreter: Explains the site's heritage significance to visitors.
- Heritage researcher: Researches stories for exhibits.
- Historian: Provides the historical background for exhibits.
- Historical researcher: Researches stories for collections.
- Information officer: Handles general inquiries from the public.
- Librarian / information specialist: Helps people search for information.
- Lighting technician: Appropriately lights exhibits.
- Marketing director: Promotes the festival to media and the public.
- Marketing / communications manager: Promotes the site to the general public.
- Meeting planner: Oversees and implements the planning and delivery of an event.
- Musician / Song Writer
- Museum / art gallery / historic site director: Manages the overall operations.
- Naturalist / botanist / biologist: Cares for the wildlife and plant life.
- Park ranger: Oversees the operation of a park.
- Park superintendent: Oversees the management of a park.
- Performer: Entertains in his or her area of specialty.
- Photographer: Creates visual record for promotional and archival purposes.
- Preparator: Installs and maintains exhibits.
- Product developer: Develops exhibit-related items for sale to the public
- Recording Engineer
- Technical director: Oversees the festival's presentation and stage management.
- Tour group marketing director: Coordinates the marketing of the event with large tour groups.
- Tour guide: Leads tours of the exhibit.
- Translator/Language Interpreter
- Security guard: Provides on-site security.
- Site coordinator: Handles the day-to-day running of the site.
- Site production manager: Plots locations of tents and how traffic flows through the site.

## Original School Feasibility Study

- Sponsorship coordinator / fund-raiser: Finds sponsors or raises money for the exhibit or organization.
- Visual Artist
- Volunteer coordinator: Recruits, trains and schedules volunteers.
- Writer: Writes about artifacts.

### 10.3 Appendix III: Lessons from Other Rotinonhsón:ni Schools

#### Onondaga Nation School

In New York, the Rotinonhsón:ni have had to contend with the same issues since 1846 when the New York State Legislature enacted a law to provide for education on Allegany, Cattaraugus, Onondaga and Akwesasne. Tonawanda Seneca and Tuscarora were included in 1855, with Oneida being added in 1857. By 1964, only the school at Onondaga, Tuscarora and Akwesasne remained. The goal of the education was the same as in Canada – to assimilate the Rotinonhsón:ni students.

At one point the superintendent of the Onondaga School stated the traditional system of governance by Chiefs had to be eliminated, as “paganism” and “practical communism” was destroying incentives for personal growth, in other words, a desire for the accumulation of personal wealth.

By the 1950s, most of the Rotinonhsón:ni students were attending off-territory schools in Lafayette, Gowanda, Salmon River and Niagara-Wheatfield. Fed up with a culturally-unresponsive system and the lack of local control over education, the Mohawks at Akwesasne organized a boycott of the Salmon River School District in 1968. This was followed by a boycott at the Onondaga school in 1971. The issues were the same as here at Six Nations:

- Lack of community control
- Lack of cultural enrichment
- High drop out rates
- Limited instruction in Rotinonhsón:ni languages

Anna Lewis, Tuscarora, developed a position paper on Indian Education in 1971, the year following the closing of the Mohawk Institute, that outlined the agenda for change that is still valid today:

- Creation of local education boards to assume control of educational programs serving Rotinonhsón:ni communities.
- Create a demonstration school based upon the Navaho Rough Rock Demonstration School which started in 1966 that changed the curriculum to reflect their own culture, history, and traditions, or code of ethics.
- Create internship-in-leadership program
- Expand post-secondary higher education programs
- Develop new resources and curricula
- Improve health attention to Rotinonhsón:ni families
- Establish day-care centres
- Address special problems faced by Rotinonhsón:ni in urban areas

## Original School Feasibility Study

The Onondaga Nation School near Syracuse, NY has a set of Principles listed on the wall of the school and reflected in how the primary school operates:

- We will be of good mind, good heart, and keep peace around us.
- We are respectful of ourselves, each other, our school and our community.
- We appreciate each other's uniqueness and gifts.
- We are patient.
- We are polite.
- We help and cooperate with each other.
- We are considerate and understanding.

### Akwesasne Freedom School

“While education does take place in the classroom, the students learn the basics like math, and social studies, etc.; the Akwesasne Freedom School students also have the entire outdoors as a classroom. The woods, rivers, marshes, and the community garden provide a learning environment. The students, being steeped in their traditional teachings, are environmentally conscious with a deep respect for the community and all of creation. Recently, the students planted 3,000 trees in an effort to create a forest.”

Kanatiiosh (Barbara Gray), Akwesasne Mohawk <sup>43</sup>

The Akwesasne Freedom School was started in 1979 born of a Mohawk struggle for self-determination and self-government. It is characterized by a deep commitment to the maintenance of Mohawk identity and language. It currently is a primary school, however, the lessons learned can be helpful to us in regard to the role that culture can play in strengthening our youth.

When the school first started, they hired fluent speakers of Kanienke:ha, but those people were Church goers, as their families had kept the language alive. However, they often did not have the cultural context that produces and supports the language. Working with Longhouse leaders, the teachers gained increased understanding of the deeper meaning of what it means to be Mohawk.

The Akwesasne Freedom School (AFS) learned some valuable lessons in creating a viable community-based culturally-infused school. Dr. Louellyn White (Akwesasne Mohawk) wrote the book - “Free to be Mohawk – Indigenous Education at the Akwesasne Freedom School,” (2015). She chose the pine tree as the symbol for their holistic approach to learning. The roots of that tree are the core teachings that grow out of the Creation Story. The Mohawk language introduces the learners to ceremonies, songs, dances, and nature, supported by experiential learning. Through experiencing those ‘subjects’ the learners become more aware of the underlying Mohawk values that give those things more significance.

Those values, according to the AFS, are respect, kinship, responsibility, stewardship, cooperation, and leadership. The end goal was to enable the learners to be “Fully Mohawk.”

White’s research identified some important matters for us to consider:

- The Mohawk language is used to support and encourage a process for each child to learn their roles and responsibilities.

## Original School Feasibility Study

- The guiding principles of the school are derived from the Great Law of Peace: Skennen (Peace), Kasatstensera (Strength) and Kanikonriio (Good Mind) and are reflected by student thinking and conduct.
- Some people tended to ridicule those who didn't speak Mohawk. This created shame and fear of learning.
- Knowledge of the Mohawk language is only one aspect of being Mohawk.
- The focus is to develop the whole child to be "fully Mohawk," by understanding the culture behind the language.
- Values fostered at the school include respect, self-respect, peace, kinship, responsibility, cooperation, relationships, leadership, and stewardship.
- Identity development and strong self-concept are reinforced; everyone is unique.
- Academic subjects such as math, language arts and science are also important to master.
- Students develop a self-assuredness that helps guide them in future studies and gives them courage to face life and take leadership roles in the community.
- Evaluations and assessments must be coherent and consistent with the culture.
- Socialization is supported by having students engage in the community so that they learn their civic and ceremonial responsibilities.
- Philosophy is made real in adopting *Tho niihtonhak ne onkwa'nikon:ra* (Let's bring our minds together as one) as a management and education strategy.

This last point is very important. How the Original School is developed and managed, how courses are delivered, and how students are treated should be a reflection of the core cultural values that we stand for. The school is not about culture, it is a reflection of that culture, and the traditional concept of coming to one mind can become an operational standard that allows for students, parents, teachers and administrators to share an equal role on the functioning of the school. Overall governance matters of all the schools in the community needs to be addressed beyond the scope of this project. However, for the Original School to work as a demonstration of cultural veracity, it cannot be drive from a top-down model, and instead has to be self-governing.

The Akwesasnee Freedom School has a partnership with Kanonhkwatsheri:ie Social Development and Health Facility. This facility is located near Kana:takon School in St. Regis, Quebec. This centre promotes healthy lifestyles and holistically treats the needs of the people of Akwesasne. The mandate is the promotion of a healthy lifestyle, the prevention of disease and the treatment of the physical, emotional, mental and social needs of members of the community. Staff from the centre regularly visit the school and educate students about healthy ways of living.

### Kahnawake Survival School

In 1978, 300 high school students walked out of Quebec school in reaction to Bill 101 Charter of the French Language. After failed attempts to get the bill changed, Kahnawake parents pulled their children out of school. Carrying picket signs, they marched the eight kilometres from the school back to the community where Kahnawake Survival School was created. Classes at Survival started the following Monday. There were no textbooks, no curriculum, no money to pay teachers and no building.

"Kahnawake Survival School also known as K.S.S provides a culturally based education which prepares our students to meet the challenges of the 21st century as Kanien'kehá:ka. Students at our school

## Original School Feasibility Study

receive the fundamental skills to succeed and are encouraged to explore their interests and aspirations after high school. Whether that be through post-secondary education or career training.

“With a wide range of support, including resource assistance, career, health, occupational therapy, speech, social counseling and more, we feel that together with parents, our students can reach their full potential.

“Most importantly, we feel our committed and well-qualified staff (15-1 student/teacher ratio) provides the necessary care and guidance that our young people deserve. K.S.S. graduates have gone on to excel in many different academic and career fields, along with providing positive contributions to the community.

“KSS graduates continue to be role models, parents, and proud individuals. Our students and graduates continue to strive to make Kahnawake better. I will continue on with this tradition of ensuring KSS is a positive and healthy environment for our youth.” Jackie Leclaire, Principal. Kahnawake Survival School

Kahnawake Survival School (KSS) is a secondary-level school with a mission to produce proud and self-sufficient Kanien’kehá:ka youth through a powerful curriculum based on Kanien’kehá:ka language, beliefs, and traditions.

The school offers Kanien’kéha classes — learners are placed in a class that best suits their Kanien’kéha language proficiency — that instill in learners the various grammar and language rules, relevant vocabulary, and an overview of Kanien’keh:ka traditions, legends, and ceremonial practices.

The Kahnawa:ke Community Education System provides our children with quality education based upon Kanien’keha:ka beliefs, values, language, and traditions. We believe that our children should be educated in their community, with their peers, and taught by qualified educators, who know the community, the culture and the curriculum. We believe that children, who have a strong Kanien’keha:ka self-concept and positive self-esteem, will become respectful, self-sufficient, and self-determined Kahnawa’kehro:non.

Kahnawake Survival School offers a wide variety of programs and services that will meet the needs and interests of our students:

- Trilingual Based Education
- Science Labs with Cross-Curricular Instruction
- Cultural Teachings and Activities
- Partnerships with External Organizations
  - McGill
  - Concordia
- College Prep Programs
- Research writing/methods
- Pathways
- Workplace oriented training
- G.M.A.A sports affiliation
- Student support services
- Resource, nurse, etc.



- Academic advisor support

Learners are educated in:

- Kanien'kéha
- Social Studies
- Math
- Science
- Language Arts
- Computer Technology
- Exploratory (Art and Carpentry)
- French Language

In addition, the KSS Social Studies classes provide students with historical knowledge that begins Pre-Contact, with events such as the Great Law of Peace being explored. With a dedicated French Department, students will adopt a third language to better prepare themselves for future work and education beyond KSS. In addition to academics, after-school sports programs—such as wrestling and volleyball—are offered throughout the year.

Kahnawake has a successful community-based parent committee in place. One example of a parent and school partnership is the Diabetes (in school) Prevention Program. The approach taken by this community is based on four cornerstones to success. They are:

1. Community members and researchers are in partnership in all aspects of projects and programs.
2. The agenda is flexible and responsive to community needs.
3. All projects allow for learning opportunities for all involved.
4. The integration of intervention and evaluation components.

The Kahnawake Schools Diabetes Prevention Project (KSDPP) exists within a context of traditional Iroquoian history and belief system. The Iroquois foundations include The Great Law of Peace -the Kaianereko:wa - and the Creation Story and ancient ceremonies. These reflect key teachings-the importance of the balance of society between men and women, the equality of all human beings in the society, and the emphasis on responsibilities of men and women in not only taking care of today, but providing for the seven generations ahead. The strength of the Iroquoian spirit is demonstrated in Kahnawake Mohawk Territory from the 1960s to today with events such as the re-emergence of traditional government within the community, parents coming together to control of the educational system, and community members taking control of health, community and social services.