

Oka Crisis: Photo Analysis: Historical Significance

Criteria 1: Did it result in change? The Oka Crisis was an important part of the First Nations history and especially the Mohawk community, but the standoff did not result in change. (1) According to the article "Oka legacy questioned" written in 2010, there are "still more than \$3000 aboriginal land claims outstanding- including the one launched by the Mohawk of Kanesatake". Still after all that time, the Mohawk community was still arguing that this land is theirs and are still trying to receive the land claim. In the (2) article the Grand Chief of Kanesatake, Sohensise Paul Nicholas has stated that "there has been progress with the land claim but at snail pace". In another article (3) called "Oka aids Mohawks in land dispute" it states how back in 2010 a land developer had proposed plans to build homes on the "disputed land that was across the street from the Pines stand that was at the heart of the 1990 dispute". The town of Oka had voted to freeze any land development so that the developer couldn't start another dispute like the one that happened 20 years ago. But the land developer made it clear that he "was still going to mark the trees to be cut down". It is evident that even after the Oka Crisis people still don't understand that they should be showing respect for the Native community. The "Oka Standoff" photo does not represent a result of change very well. In the photo the Mohawk warrior and the army soldier are face to face which represents the standoff between the two parties. You would think that a big standoff like this would have made a difference between the relations of the First Nations and the government but that wasn't the case. This standoff did not result in change because the Mohawk community have still not received claim on the land and therefore this photo does not represent a result of change.

Criteria 2: Did it reveal something? I think that the Oka Crisis revealed what the government thinks about the First Nations people and how little respect they have for them. In an article "what we fought (4) for in Oka we still fight for today" a 39-year-old woman explains her experience as a 14-year-old teenager during the Oka Crisis. She explains how she interprets Canadians thoughts on the Oka Crisis when she says "its funny to me, in a not so funny way, that so many Canadians just don't get it, 25 years later. They think we started the fight". This interpretation reveals how the Canadian government saw the Mohawks as insurgents and that they think they started the fight in Oka. She also says something that is very true (5) which was "its not a protest if its your own land". The Mohawks were protecting their sacred land in which was the burial grounds of family and friends but the government did not see it as guarding but in fact a protest. She also reveals her view of the world when she says that this "day shaped my world view and made me realize fighting government that value the game of golf over the final resting place of my (6) grandparents, great aunts and uncles, cousins and friends". This reveals that the government is so insensitive to the Mohawks and did not respect the fact that where they were planning to build a golf course would be over the remains of people's family and friends. In "video 1" posted on the Social and Global Studies website an Olympic athlete, Waneek Horn Miller explains her horrific experience during (7) the Oka Crisis. Waneek was confronted with a Canadian soldier with her 4-year old sister and in the video, she describes what happened. Waneek said, "I pulled my sister behind me and the suddenly I got hit in the chest". This was the moment when Waneek was stabbed while holding her 4-year old sister in her arms. This reveals how the government did not care how old you were but they saw all Mohawks as criminals, including young children, even though they were not involved in the standoff. According to an (8) article titled "Mohawk warriors to get military apology" the Canadian Forces officially listed the Mohawk warriors "as a potentially violent insurgent group in a draft manual in 2006". A pervious district chief of Mohawk Council of Akwesasne considered this mention to be "a slap in the face" and that "this mention angered the Mohawks who claimed they were being compared to the international terror groups". This

✓ reveals that even after all these years the government is still considering the Mohawks as criminals and insurgents. The "Oka Standoff" photo does a good job of revealing the governments thoughts on the Mohawks and First Nations people in general. In the "Oka standoff" photo the Mohawks warrior and the soldier are eye to eye. But the soldier does not see the Mohawk warrior as a person but a criminal who is committing a crime because he is standing up for what is right.

Criteria 3: What narrative does it belong to? I think the government is the dominant and trivialized narrative in the historical remembering of the Oka Crisis. On the Government of Canada website in the article written about First Nations in Canada they explain their point of view towards the Oka Crisis.

- ⑨ According to the article "the Quebec Provincial Police tried to dismantle a road block that had been set up outside a road block that had been set up outside Montreal in mid-March by a group of Mohawks from Kanesatake". This is the first piece of information that they give the readers on the website which causes people to believe that the Mohawks started the fight. In another article called "Quotes from various Oka-related players" John Parisella, chief staff to the the-Quebec premier explains his Oka experience. He says that "from the outset it was decided that we wouldn't use force. It could have created a precedent either for poisoning generations between native's communities and Quebec. Not to mention Canada and Quebec's international reputations were on the line". This shows how the government was only concerned about their image so they started to make the public believe that they weren't violent and that the Mohawks were. But, the government police were the ones who started invading with tear gas and concussion grenades, and they also started the gun fight against the Mohawk warriors. Canada wanted to
- ✓ keep their reputation or "stereotype" that we are a peaceful and understanding country so they tried to change the story displayed to the entire country by saying that the Mohawks started the fight and were
- ⑪ the violent ones. In an article titled "Oka Crisis: Mohawk claim to pine forest never resolved", a member of the Mohawk community in Kanesatake named Ellen Gabriel said "this is a major event in Canadian history. It should be taught in schools. Its not even taught in [Kanesatke's] schools. Isn't that sad?". The
- ⑫ fact that the Oka Crisis, an important part of Canadian and First Nations history is not taught in schools is revealing. The government wants to trivialize this event and cover up their mistakes and not have children learn about how discriminative their government was (and still today) to the First Nations. This is probably one of the most significant ways that the government has been the dominant narrative because not many
- ✓ people are educated about the Oka Crisis and that's exactly what the government wants. But even if people are aware of the Crisis, the government tries to display a false story that makes it seem like they didn't start the fight or that they weren't violent. The "Oka Standoff" photo does a good job of showing that the government is the dominant narrative. In the photo the Mohawk warriors face is covered by a bandana, but the government polices face is the only face visible. Seeing only the government polices face makes it seem more like their story than the Mohawks. Also, many people are not educated about this issue so if they were to see this photo, they would likely have recognized the mans face who's is visible as a government police and assume this issue is related to the government and not have a clue that it is an issue related to the First Nations community.

Overall, I think that the "Oka Standoff" photo does represent the historical significance of the Oka Crisis very well. The two parties standing eye to eye represents how it was a big part of out history, the anger that was let out by both parties and that the government should start to consider how they are treating the First Nations community.

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SER 4+ 4H
DOI 4+ 4H
ASC 4+ 4H
3DUC 4+ 4H
WS 4 4H

KU 9.5
T 10
COM 9
APP 10

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