

It was a concern that we were being sold out, that our land was being sold out from under us, our traditional lands. And I supported the idea in my own spirit that we could not trust the leadership at that time and that something had to be done. (Morris Gabriel, Issue No. 53:15)

There have been longstanding doubts held by the Mohawk people about the sincerity of the government parties in negotiations. Mr. Curtis Nelson of the Longhouse at Kanesatake stated before the Committee:

There has never been a serious attempt on the part of your government to negotiate in good faith with our traditional government, the true holder of title to the land. Your government has consistently refused to recognize treaties, signed by your Crown, or to acknowledge the Longhouse people, until very recently. (Issue No. 53:54)

The negative experience of the Mohawk community with the federal land claims process in the 1970's and 1980's only contributed to Mohawk suspicions.

Curtis Nelson also stated that :

[Mohawk] surveillance of the area we call The Pines began on March 10, 1990. This was after the lifting by the municipal council of a moratorium on the expansion of a private golf course and after unanimous ratification of the project by the golf club membership on March 9. Barricades were later erected on the seasonally-used dirt road, leading through a forest, most of which was slated to be clear-cut for the expansion project. (Issue No. 53:54)

The evidence of Longhouse members appearing before the Committee with Chief Samson Gabriel on March 12, 1991, suggests that there was debate within the Longhouse over the issue of armed resistance on or about July 5, 1990. However, the evidence of Dan Gaspé, who was the Kanesatake band administrator from January to March 9, 1990 suggests that the issue of using arms was raised as early as March 1990, following a community meeting. Mr. Gaspé stated:

On March 8 I co-chaired a community meeting. About 10 people decided that there would be an occupation of the territory. Things had degenerated to the point where negotiations were not going to happen, and people were very concerned about that. We were looking for a way to safeguard our lands. Within a couple of days a small group from the community—they had not been present at that community meeting—decided on its own to take over the process. The other meeting co-chairman and I thought this was okay until we had a discussion with them about the rules for the occupation. When we tried to set some rules for how this project was going to go forward, we lost the argument as to whether or not arms were going to be used. My point of view was that arms should not be used at all. They should not even be in the area. With support from friends I argued this point two days but I lost out in the end. (Issue No. 54:56)