

IV. EVENTS FOLLOWING JULY 11, 1990

When the Longhouse people of The Pines appeared before the Committee on March 6, 1991, they carefully asserted their sovereignty, accused the various governments of invading their land without provocation on their part, and of using the issue of law and order to obscure the fundamental issues of land rights and sovereignty. Mary David/Kasenenhowi stated: "We are here today to assert our sovereignty and to state that the crisis of last summer was really only a sideshow created by your government in order to camouflage problems that existed long before July 11, 1990, that it chose to leave unaddressed." (Issue No. 51:6)

On the morning of July 11, 1990 an exchange of gunfire occurred between the provincial police, the Sûreté du Québec, and armed persons behind the barricade in The Pines. It is an undisputed fact that Corporal Lemay died from gunshot wounds received during this exchange of gunfire. The question of responsibility for the death of Corporal Lemay and related issues such as which side fired first and for what reasons are not issues the Standing Committee is equipped or suited to answer. The Longhouse delegation played an audiotape of the morning's events for the Committee's benefit but without any detailed verbal explanation by this witness group or others, the Committee is not in a position to say much about what happened the morning of July 11, 1990. This is not the fault of the witnesses who kindly shared their perspectives on many important matters but is a reality arising from ongoing proceedings in the courts. The Committee's inquiry and witness testimony were necessarily limited by the existence of outstanding criminal proceedings relating to the conflict between police and Mohawk people in The Pines.

The most common recommendation of witnesses has been a call for an independent inquiry to thoroughly explore the facts, events and issues around the 1990 Oka conflict. While commending the Standing Committee's work, many witnesses saw a need for a critical fact-finding exercise that would go beyond the powers, resources and time available to a Parliamentary Standing Committee. Such an inquiry would be more detailed than that possible by the Standing Committee and would be broader in scope than any criminal proceedings arising from the summer's events, as such proceedings will be strictly limited to facts relevant to particular criminal charges against particular individuals. In addition to satisfying the right of the Canadian public to know exactly what happened during the summer of 1990 and why, the resolution of some policy issues would be aided by a careful investigation of facts that are likely not available except through an inquiry process.

Many of the Mohawk people indicated that they were not especially surprised by what happened on July 11th, as they saw it as part of a longstanding, deep rooted conflict between nations and cultures, a conflict that in their view has either been ignored or mismanaged from its inception. Several witnesses suggested that racism and widespread ignorance of native cultures and histories were major contributors to the development of