

## II. AN OVERVIEW OF KANESATAKE

### I. INTRODUCTION

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The tragic conflict at Oka, Quebec deeply shocked all Canadians. The events of the summer of 1990 at Kanesatake and Kahnawake will remain with us for some time: the violent conflict between police and the people in "The Pines" on the 11th of July 1990; the death of Corporal Lemay; the blocking of the Mercier Bridge; civil unrest and expressions of racial hatred; widespread allegations of human rights abuses; the invoking of the National Defence Act to deploy at times up to 3,700 Canadian soldiers to Oka and Châteauguay, Kanesatake and Kahnawake; the emotional and psychological trauma suffered by all involved, particularly children; the stoning of Mohawk women, children and elders on the 28th of August 1990; the destruction and loss of property and livelihoods.

The complex issues underlying this conflict and the confusion and bitterness felt in its aftermath need to be grappled with in a substantive and sensitive way by federal, provincial, municipal and First Nations leadership. Every effort must be made to avoid any further violence and to heal the pain of all those touched by these tragic events. The critical state of relations between First Nations and the federal and provincial governments must be addressed, as well as the issues of racism and the political status of indigenous people in Canada.

The public record created by the Committee's proceedings has produced much valuable evidence and wise counsel. The hearings have also brought forth the critical issues on which action is required. However, the unavailability of some important witnesses and restrictions on the Committee's time meant that some critical information related to the events of the summer of 1990 is not part of this record.

As might be expected, the Committee's proceedings revealed fundamentally different perspectives on the summer's events. One witness said there is likely no one truth but a truth for every person reflecting different experiences and vantage points. In order to share some of these perspectives and what might be learned from them, this report will begin with an overview of the community of Kanesatake and a chronology of events leading to the conflict.