



Building Change On and Off Reserve: Six Nations of the Grand River Territory

Susan Marie Turner and Julia Bomberry

This is an account of how the authors worked together on two projects in Canada that begin from the standpoint of, and working *for*, the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory community and Haudenosaunee people.

Many people on Six Nations of the Grand River Territory supported our work. Ganohkwasra Family Assault Support Services and Executive Director Sandra Montour did community-minded work for the Haudenosaunee people long before this, with the goal of realizing Ganohkwasra (Love Among Us). Project researchers Gabriella Salazar and Amye Werner, Doris Henry, Staff at Ganohkwasra, and Six Nations Police Service Officers, Policy Analyst, and Chief Glen Lickers, contributed substantially to the work and its success. Off-reserve justice and service providers generously participated, telling us about how they do their everyday work and joining our Final Gathering presentation and conversation at Ganohkwasra. Nya:weh.

Quotations throughout this chapter are the words of the speaker but in some cases lengthy quotations have been condensed for clarity and in order to succinctly convey and highlight the points speakers are making and formulating in conversation.

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S. M. Turner (✉)
Guelph, ON, Canada

The chapter describes how we adapted Institutional Ethnography concepts, methods, and techniques in order to prioritize the community's and partner organization's goals, work with Haudenosaunee principles, fit the concrete realities of the community, and work in politically charged settings on highly sensitive topics: police investigations and services for Six Nations victims of sexual violence.

Six Nations of the Grand River Reserve is the largest First Nations reserve in Canada with 26,034 registered band members, 12,436 living on reserve; its 46,000 acres is just 5% of the land set out in a 1784 Treaty. Previously the Cayuga, Mohawk, Seneca, Onondaga, Oneida, and Tuscarora nations' Territories covered much of Southwestern Ontario and New York State. The creation of reserves and residential schools was part of centuries of governing strategies to create a Canadian nation and eliminate First Nations (see Castellano, Archibald, & DeGagne, 2008; Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004). Located in Southwestern Ontario, Six Nations sits adjacent to the Montreal–Windsor highway corridor that is one of the highest risk areas for drugs and human trafficking. The former Mohawk Institute residential school in nearby Brantford that operated for 139 years is now the Woodland Cultural Center.

Six Nations people are Haudenosaunee (People of the Longhouse). The clan system is the traditional government preserved over centuries. Williams (2018) describes how many centuries ago a message of peace and system of law—*Kayanerenko:wa*—was brought by one individual known as The Peacemaker to the original five nations, in order to build peace and a structure based on their clan systems that would maintain peaceful relations among them. Its elements are first, that everyone is capable of a rational “Good Mind” that chooses peaceful ways, and that all people are related and therefore obligated to help one another (see also Cousins, 2005). Once bound together as one family in one structure, the nations called themselves Haudenosaunee. Following “The Great Law,” individuals are peacemakers. Spoken at gatherings, the law is something that people actively know and live in relationship to others. The second element is the constitution and governing processes of a civic society of nations under The Great Law of Peace.¹ Longhouse communities extend all around Lake Ontario. Every Haudenosaunee citizen is a member of a clan that extends into the past and future. The obligation to help one another is integral to the Haudenosaunee worldview of being in relationship in a web of all living things: the laws are “natural” laws of responsibility for upholding peace and order in all relations.

Our research began from the experience of Ganohkwasra Family Assault Support Services (Ganohkwasra), the Six Nations organization that has sheltered and worked with victims of violence on the Territory for over thirty

J. Bomberry

Six Nations of the Grand River Territory, Brant, ON, Canada

e-mail: jbomberry@ganohkwasra.com

years. Ganohkwasra's goal for the project was to learn the work of the Six Nations Police Service (SNPS) in order to strengthen relationships with them and within the community and improve services for the Haudenosaunee. This account provides a just glimpse into the process, work, and learning involved in this project that has resulted in significant changes on and off reserve.

Our work was an ongoing dialogue and conversation. How this chapter is written is part of how we work together. The use of "we" reflects that and refers to the collectivity of the researchers. Both are authors of this work. Susan is the writer here, however, our approach, learning, work, and outcomes were developed together in ongoing conversations over several years. Julia's voice appears separately in italics as her words also may: (1) draw on the relevancies of her experience as Haudenosaunee or Onkwéhonwéh (Cayuga language meaning Original People here); (2) refer to Ganohkwasra and their relevancies as a non-profit First Nations on-reserve organization; or (3) reference Six Nations as a community of First Nations whose original laws and teachings endure as a reference point of principles for the Haudenosaunee.

We completed two projects under provincial Aboriginal Sexual Violence Action Plan (ASVAP) Programs. The first was part of a province-wide 2012–2015 Aboriginal Community Response Initiative funded by the Ontario Women's Directorate. Ganohkwasra was one of four Indigenous organizations invited to undertake research in their community. The provincial Indigenous organization that received the funds wanted to use institutional ethnography (IE). Susan and Dorothy Smith gave a 3-day workshop on IE to organization leaders. Susan was hired to train community researchers in institutional ethnography and assist them in their projects. Julia and Gabriella Salazar interviewed Six Nations residential school and sexual violence survivors, police and service providers (Werner, in consultation with J. Bomberry, 2016). The second project (Bomberry, Turner, & Werner, 2016) was funded by the Ontario Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services 2016 Police Responses to Sexual Violence and Harassment Against Aboriginal Women and Girls' Program. Ganohkwasra's Executive Director Sandra Montour asked Susan to apply for funding with Ganohkwasra as partner in affiliation with Six Nations Police. Ganohkwasra wanted to go deeper with the Police into sexual assault investigations and services, from Six Nations' standpoint, work with IE and Haudenosaunee principles, and produce the (Ministry-required) best practices for investigations that were *culture-based*. The proposal was explicitly IE and to achieve real outcomes for the community. Ganohkwasra orients beyond projects to goals of building reciprocal knowledge relations among agencies, strengthening them and relationships in the community and outside it. We refer to our work as one project.

We first describe how Susan, a non-Indigenous institutional ethnographer, and Julia, Haudenosaunee, Cayuga Nation Clan Mother and Manager at Ganohkwasra, developed the research from the standpoint of Ganohkwasra and the Six Nations Police. That in itself is remarkable. When Susan first came to Ganohkwasra to discuss if they would join the province-wide project,

Julia and Executive Director Sandra Montour asked, “How is this going to be different? We have been researched to death and nothing has changed much.” It had to “not be another form of oppression.” When we began, sexual violence was a taboo topic on reserve and Police did not talk about their work.

Next we describe how we did the work, talking with people and graphically mapping to track and show what we were learning from them. We illustrate the map-building process. Mapping showed where significant issues arose for Six Nations officers who “navigate” Criminal Code categories and Great Law principles and are accountable within text-based procedures geared to “hand it over” to a criminal justice system that does not “fit” Six Nations. Mapping showed how providing culture-relevant services simply could not happen within the existing city-centered “well-integrated response” that precluded Six Nations victims “getting to healing.” We describe how we used mapping to discover and talk about what we were learning as we went along and the significance of using the map at a final gathering of people we had interviewed showing how we had learned from them and how their work fit into a big picture.

Our discoveries led us to call for profound changes to how services were delivered. We list our “calls to action” to government ministries and describe major changes that resulted. In conclusion, we comment on Institutional Ethnography’s potential going forward for learning from and with Indigenous communities and in research prioritizing assisting them in achieving their goals for their people and building real changes in ways of knowing and relationship and the world.

DEVELOPING THE PROJECT FROM GANOHWASRA’S STANDPOINT

Ganohkwasra (Love Among Us in the Cayuga language) is a non-profit Six Nations organization. Haudenosaunee principles are integrated into programs, management, frontline work, job descriptions, therapeutic practices, and trainings. From the start, we were building a working standpoint from Six Nations’ knowledge, experiences, views, and practices—that are often conflated as *culture*. Six Nations’ worldview and physical location was our place in the world from which to explore the externally organized policing and services delivery system.

To start, we discussed and changed funder, government, and IE language and terms to suit Six Nations realities. Before Ganohkwasra signed on to the province-wide *Aboriginal* project, we had to agree that their project would not take on its *Violence Against Women and Girls* framework that does not fit Haudenosaunee worldview and laws. Julia explains,

We (Ganohkwasra, Haudenosaunee) don’t label women as victims and men as perpetrators. Our belief is that everyone has the possibility of being either victim or