

Kahente begins with her traditional introduction in the language of her people, the Kahnawà:ke:ronon (people of Kahnawà:ke).

My name is Kahente Horn-Miller and I am Kanien:keha'ka, also known as Mohawk, from Kahnawà:ke.

I am also a mother to four and a grandmother to one.

I'm an associate professor in the School of Indigenous and Canadian Studies at Carleton University.

What is Indigenous governance? Indigenous governance, in a nutshell, is community centred. It is about differential power structures, with power being held by the collective. It is about accountability, thinking forward to a seven generations ahead. It is about male and female being of equal standing. It is about consensus, peace, and survival.

You see our governance systems were originally meant to structure our communities in a way that would enable us to survive some pretty harsh conditions. They also allowed us to engage with other nations in a way that brought us together in peace. Diplomacy, you see, is a key factor for Indigenous governance.

And the marks my people, the Haudenosaunee, chiefs were chosen by the women. So, when we think about the qualities of a chief, we think in the English word, it means something different from what our people understand it to be. A chief, in our view, is a mentor to the people. They have to have their skin seven spans thick, meaning they aren't impacted by harsh words. Their heart has to be filled with peace and good will for the people. They are of the people and for the people at all times. They no longer can think only of themselves.

They have to be patient. They cannot be angry, angry. They have to remain calm in all deliberative actions. They must listen to the people, and of course it is our grandmothers that holds them accountable. And of course, they always have to consider the impacts of their actions seven generations ahead.

Today, the word governance, or even government, brings to mind something entirely different. We can't ignore the impact of the *Indian Act* and colonization on our governance systems. While, while they are still here, they are no longer central to our communities, and nations as they once were, and we are forced deal with differential power structures. Band councils are top-down in nature and their power comes out of the *Indian Act*. This is not participatory democracy. Thank you for listening.