

# Terms of Reference for the Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke Ratitsénhaienhs

Enacted by MCED # / 2026 - 2027

Approved on:

## Purpose

- 1.1 The following sections establish and describe the roles and responsibilities of the Ratitsénhaienhs as elected representatives of the Kanien'kehá:ka of Kahnawà:ke using the principles of the *Community Vision Statement* as the priority guiding document.

## Decision-Making Authority

- 2.1 Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke (MCK) Ratitsénhaienhs are elected to their position according to the *Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke Election Law* ("MCK Election Law").
- 2.2 The Ratitsénhaienhs has the authority to make decisions on:
  - 2.2.1 Political priorities for Kanien'kehá:ka of Kahnawà:ke;
  - 2.2.2 Overall strategic direction for the MCK as an organization;
  - 2.2.3 Laws, regulations, and policies affecting governance in Kahnawà:ke; and
  - 2.2.4 General planning of MCK resources.
- 2.3 They do not hold authority to intervene in operational and/or administrative matters of the MCK as an organization, unless formally mandated to do so by the Ratitsénhaienhs.

## Accountability

- 3.1 The Ratitsénhaienhs are accountable to Kanien'kehá:ka of Kahnawà:ke, to each other, and to the MCK as an organization with respect to all actions and decisions pertaining to their roles and responsibilities.
- 3.2 The Ratitsénhaienhs must respect and uphold all laws applicable within the Territory.
- 3.3 The Ratitsénhaienhs must perform the duties and responsibilities of their positions faithfully, conscientiously, loyally and diligently, respecting their *Oath of Office* and *Code of Conduct*, and in accordance with the administration guidelines and operational policies for the Ratitsénhaienhs, and all other applicable MCK policies and regulations.
- 3.4 The Ratitsénhaienhs are expected to conduct themselves and make informed decisions that respect the principles of fairness, dignity of persons, compassion, and consensus, harmonious with the traditions, philosophies, and customs of the Kanien'kehá:ka of Kahnawà:ke.

- 3.5 The Ratitsénhaienhs shall be cognizant of their position as a leader and ensure that their actions, whether personal or within their professional capacity, are taken so that they do not tarnish the public image or credibility of the Ratitsénhaienhs or of the MCK as an organization.

## **General Roles**

- 4.1 The role of the Ratitsénhaienhs is to protect and defend the rights and interests of the Kanien'kehá:ka of Kahnawà:ke, promote collective well-being, protect the jurisdiction of the Territory, and to uphold and ensure the effective governance of the community.
- 4.2 The Ratitsénhaienhs are expected to:
- 4.2.1 Support the revitalization of Kanien'kéha and protect Kanien'kehá:ka culture and traditions;
  - 4.2.2 Contribute to the protection and advancement of Kanien'kehá:ka Nationhood;
  - 4.2.3 Assert and defend Kahnawà:ke's jurisdiction;
  - 4.2.4 Strive to unify Kahnawà:ke;
  - 4.2.5 Ensure continued development of Kahnawà:ke legislation;
  - 4.2.6 Maintain and enhance territorial connection for current and future generations;
  - 4.2.7 Defend the principles of the Kahswéntha, the Two Row Wampum;
  - 4.2.8 Foster economic self-sufficiency for Kahnawà:ke;
  - 4.2.9 Support social development and the well-being of Kanien'kehá:ka of Kahnawà:ke;
  - 4.2.10 Ensure community development and the effective provision of community services; and
  - 4.2.11 Protect the environment and territory of the Kanien'kehá:ka of Kahnawà:ke.
- 4.3 In carrying out the roles outlined above, the Ratitsénhaienhs must serve the community respectfully and encourage creative and critical thinking with a clear mind.

## **Duties and Responsibilities of the Ratitsénhaienhs**

- 5.1 The Ratitsénhaienhs have all the duties and responsibilities in accordance with the *Declaration of Oath of Office*, the *Relationship Framework between the MCK Executive Director and MCK Ratitsénhaienhs & Ohén:ton Í:rate/Í:iente ne Ratitsénhaienhs*, *Political Principles to Guide Decision Making*, and all other applicable policies, laws, and regulations of the MCK.
- 5.2 The Ratitsénhaienhs will protect and promote the jurisdiction of Kahnawà:ke in their respective role(s) as prescribed by applicable policies and portfolio mandates to:
- 5.2.1 Support the creation of Kahnawà:ke legislation, via participation in the Community Decision Making and Review Process (CDMRP);

- 5.2.2 Dialogue and negotiate with external governments; and
- 5.2.3 Make and provide direction on political decisions.
- 5.3 Ratitsénhaienhs are expected to participate in the decision-making practices of government and promote the general welfare of Kanien'kehá:ka of Kahnawà:ke. They must:
  - 5.3.1 Attend and participate in all scheduled meetings of the Ratitsénhaienhs, as well as Community Meetings and Portfolio Meetings, whereas prior notice is expected when unable to attend;
  - 5.3.2 Ensure follow up to decisions of the Ratitsénhaienhs;
  - 5.3.3 Ensure all necessary correspondence is addressed; and
  - 5.3.4 Participate on portfolios and committees to engage with files as assigned and in accordance with Portfolio allocations.
- 5.4 Ratitsénhaienhs will:
  - 5.4.1 Provide guidance and strategic direction to the MCK organization;
  - 5.4.2 Provide leadership in community and organizational disputes;
  - 5.4.3 Report to Kanien'kehá:ka of Kahnawà:ke on political and global activities of the MCK;
  - 5.4.4 Support MCK Units to operate independently from the political body;
  - 5.4.5 Collaborate with the MCK Executive Director for effective operation of the MCK organization;
  - 5.4.6 Be available to all community members to assist with concerns and issues, whether or not they pertain to their specific portfolios; and
  - 5.4.7 Respond to community conflict to mitigate safety risks.
- 5.5 Ratitsénhaienhs are assigned leadership roles on portfolio teams and must:
  - 5.5.1 As Portfolio Leads, call Portfolio Team meetings and set meeting agendas;
  - 5.5.2 As Portfolio Leads, provide direction to the relevant Portfolio Coordinators and Teams, and ensure implementation of portfolios' mandates;
  - 5.5.3 As Portfolio Leads, act as the official spokesperson for Portfolio Teams, issue and sign all relevant correspondences from the Ratitsénhaienhs, and approve press releases in accordance with directions from or decisions taken by the Ratitsénhaienhs;
  - 5.5.4 Participate on governing boards and commissions in advisory capacity and as liaisons to the Ratitsénhaienhs;

- 5.5.5 As Portfolio Leads, negotiate with external governments and organizations;
  - 5.5.6 Obtain Ratitsénhaienhs approval of portfolio mandates as mandates are updated;
  - 5.5.7 Provide strategic direction to the Portfolio Teams;
  - 5.5.8 Provide regular updates to, and obtain direction from, the Ratitsénhaienhs;
  - 5.5.9 Monitor and report to Ratitsénhaienhs on external government actions affecting Kahnawà:ke prior to communicating it to the community;
  - 5.5.10 Provide input on major projects within the portfolio mandate; and
  - 5.5.11 Foster positive and effective relations between members of the Portfolio Team.
- 5.6 When mandated by the Ratitsénhaienhs, will act as liaison or board/committee member, where applicable, on various community organizational boards and committees, and in these roles they are specifically responsible to:
- 5.6.1 Inform the Ratitsénhaienhs on the activities of the organization;
  - 5.6.2 Inform the board/committee of relevant political positions or issues;
  - 5.6.3 Facilitate communications with the Ratitsénhaienhs;
  - 5.6.4 Assist organizations' leadership in liaising with other government bodies; and
  - 5.6.5 Encourage organizations' adherence to shared Kanien'kehá:ka values.
- 5.7 The Ratitsénhaienhs will provide overall direction to programs, services and projects of the MCK, and collaborate with affiliated organizations, as required.
- 5.7.1 In this role, Ratitsénhaienhs are responsible to account for and report to Kanien'kehá:ka of Kahnawà:ke on funds used or available for programs and services administered by the MCK and its affiliated organizations.
- 5.8 The Ratitsénhaienhs are responsible to ensure the development of policy responses to issues which fall outside the authority of MCK Administration and are not addressed in current policies and procedures. They are responsible to:
- 5.8.1 Act to respond to and address situations that may negatively affect Kanien'kehá:ka of Kahnawà:ke; and
  - 5.8.2 Consult with the community and MCK executive leadership on possible policy responses.
- 5.9 Ratitsénhaienhs may be required to perform other duties associated with their roles in accordance with direction from the Ratitsénhaienhs and/or as per other governance policies (including, but not limited to, the *MCK Portfolio Governance Roles & Responsibilities*, and *Relationship Framework between the MCK Executive Director and MCK Ratitsénhaienhs & Ohén:ton Í:rate/Í:iente ne Ratitsénhaienhs*).

## **Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, and Other Attributes of the Ietsénhaienhs/Ratsénhaienhs**

- 6.1 Ietsénhaienhs/Ratsénhaienhs should possess knowledge of the principles and practice of Onkwehón:we leadership, Kahnawà:ke legislation, policies, programs, procedures, regulations, and jurisdiction, a thorough understanding of community issues, an awareness of external political environments, and a strong grasp of the community's present and future needs.
- 6.2 Ietsénhaienhs/Ratsénhaienhs must participate in training available and commit to improve skills, including, but not limited to:
  - 6.2.1 Governance;
  - 6.2.2 Verbal and written communications, including computer skills;
  - 6.2.3 Conflict resolution and mediation;
  - 6.2.4 Leadership, representation, and advocacy;
  - 6.2.5 Negotiations;
  - 6.2.6 Problem solving;
  - 6.2.7 Interpersonal relations and diplomacy; and
  - 6.2.8 Coping and stress management.
- 6.3 Ietsénhaienhs/Ratsénhaienhs must be committed to improve their ability to speak Kanien'kéha and continue to advance their knowledge of Tsi Niionkwarihò:ten.

## **Roles Specific to the Ohén:ton Í:iente/Í:rate ne Ratitsénhaienhs**

- 7.1 In addition to the sections above, applicable to the Ratitsénhaienhs, the Ohén:ton Í:iente/Í:rate ne Ratitsénhaienhs holds additional roles and responsibilities, outlined in the following sections.
- 7.2 The Ohén:ton Í:iente/Í:rate ne Ratitsénhaienhs function as a leader and spokesperson for the Ratitsénhaienhs and the MCK.
- 7.3 Within three (3) months from the start of each term of office, the Ohén:ton Í:iente/Í:rate ne Ratitsénhaienhs will propose a Ietsénhaienhs/Ratsénhaienhs to serve as an alternate Ohén:ton Í:iente/Í:rate ne Ratitsénhaienhs (Alternate) who will exercise the Ohén:ton Í:iente/Í:rate ne Ratitsénhaienhs authority in the event of their temporary absence.
- 7.4 The proposed Alternate must have served one (1) full term in office, be in good standing and remain in good standing throughout their appointment, subject to approval by formal decision of the Ratitsénhaienhs.

- 7.5 Should the position of Ohén:ton Í:iente/Í:rate ne Ratitsénhaienhs become vacated at a point in time that exceeds six (6) months prior to the next scheduled general election, the Alternate shall exercise the authority of the Ohén:ton Í:iente/Í:rate ne Ratitsénhaienhs until such time as a new Ohén:ton Í:iente/Í:rate ne Ratitsénhaienhs is elected via by-election.
- 7.6 The acting Alternate will work in transition with the new Ohén:ton Í:iente/Í:rate ne Ratitsénhaienhs post by-election for a period of four (4) weeks minimum.
- 7.7 As circumstances warrant, the Ratitsénhaienhs may select a new letsénhaienhs/Ratsénhaienhs to function/hold the position as the Alternate.
- 7.8 The Ratitsénhaienhs, through consensus, may designate a letsénhaienhs/Ratsénhaienhs to fulfil duties and responsibilities of the Ohén:ton Í:iente/Í:rate ne Ratitsénhaienhs when both the Ohén:ton Í:iente/Í:rate ne Ratitsénhaienhs and Alternate are unavailable or if the latter position is vacated.
- 7.9 The role of the Ohén:ton Í:iente/Í:rate ne Ratitsénhaienhs is to be a lead for the Ratitsénhaienhs to protect and defend the rights and interests of the Kanien'kehá:ka of Kahnawà:ke, promote community overall well-being, protect the jurisdiction and integrity of the Territory, and contribute to the effective governance of the community.
- 7.10 The Ohén:ton Í:iente/Í:rate ne Ratitsénhaienhs will ensure that all practices, activities, decisions, and organizational circumstances of the Ratitsénhaienhs and the MCK are lawful, prudent, and consistent with accepted business and professional ethics.
- 7.11 Accordingly, the Ohén:ton Í:iente/Í:rate ne Ratitsénhaienhs is expected to:
- 7.11.1 Ensure the effective operation of the MCK;
  - 7.11.2 Create a climate of trust and collaboration among the Ratitsénhaienhs; and
  - 7.11.3 Ensure that Ratitsénhaienhs are fully informed on all matters affecting Kahnawà:ke as a community.

### **Duties and Responsibilities of the Ohén:ton Í:iente/Í:rate ne Ratitsénhaienhs**

- 8.1 The Ohén:ton Í:iente/Í:rate ne Ratitsénhaienhs has all the duties and responsibilities of a letsénhaienhs/Ratsénhaienhs in accordance with this *Terms of Reference*, the *Declaration of Oath of Office*, the *Relationship Framework between the MCK Executive Director and MCK Ratitsénhaienhs & Ohén:ton Í:rate/Í:iente ne Ratitsénhaienhs*, *Political Principles to Guide Decision Making*, and all other applicable policies and regulations of the MCK.
- 8.2 In addition to the abovementioned duties and responsibilities, with their authority and discretion, the Ohén:ton Í:iente/Í:rate ne Ratitsénhaienhs has these specific duties and responsibilities:
- 8.2.1 Chair all duly convened Council meetings;
  - 8.2.2 Approve final Council Meeting agendas;

- 8.2.3 Approve Council Communiqué in collaboration with the Chief Political Advisor (CPA) and the Director of the Office of the Council of Chiefs (OCC);
- 8.2.4 Facilitate decision making among Ietsénhaienhs/Ratsénhaienhs;
- 8.2.5 Oversee and manage digital Chairing responsibilities;
- 8.2.6 Facilitate conflict resolution amongst the Ratitsénhaienhs and/or employees of the Ratitsénhaienhs (MCK Executive Director, Director of the OCC and the CPA);
- 8.2.7 Call special Council Meetings or in camera sessions;
- 8.2.8 Direct logistical coordination of meetings;
- 8.2.9 Review all proposed resolutions and directives;
- 8.2.10 Approve all records of decisions issued at, and minutes of, Council Meetings;
- 8.2.11 Review, prioritize, and schedule Strategic Discussion items;
- 8.2.12 Approve the weekly schedule of Strategic Discussions;
- 8.2.13 Direct Memorandums to the Executive Office and key leadership regarding meeting format changes and changes to scheduling criteria;
- 8.2.14 Call meetings of the Ratitsénhaienhs and Public Meetings;
- 8.2.15 Serve as line supervisor of the Executive Director, CPA, and Director of the OCC;
- 8.2.16 Act as the administrative intake and responsible authority on administrative and personnel matters pertaining to the Ratitsénhaienhs;
- 8.2.17 Be responsible to receive and determine the appropriate course of action to address matters pertaining to Ietsénhaienhs / Ratsénhaienhs conduct and/or performance; and
- 8.2.18 Direct for the scheduling of the Grand Chiefs Office sessions, and associated follow-ups.

### **Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, and Other Attributes of the Ohén:ton Í:iente/Í:rate ne Ratitsénhaienhs**

- 9.1 The Ohén:ton Í:iente/Í:rate ne Ratitsénhaienhs should possess a sound knowledge of the principles and practice of Onkwehón:we leadership, Kahnawà:ke legislation, policies, programs, procedures, regulations and jurisdiction, a thorough understanding of community issues, an understanding of external political environments, and a strong grasp of the community's present and future needs.
- 9.2 The Ohén:ton Í:iente/Í:rate ne Ratitsénhaienhs should possess the skills necessary to be effective in the role, including:
  - 9.2.1 Governance;
  - 9.2.2 Verbal and written communications, including computer skills;

- 9.2.3 Conflict resolution and mediation;
  - 9.2.4 Leadership, representation, and advocacy;
  - 9.2.5 Negotiations;
  - 9.2.6 Critical thinking;
  - 9.2.7 Problem solving;
  - 9.2.8 Interpersonal relations and diplomacy; and
  - 9.2.9 Coping and stress management.
- 9.3 The Ohén:ton Í:iente/Í:rate ne Ratitsénhaienhs must be committed to continually improving the skills listed in section 9.2 and their ability to speak Kanien'kéha and continuing to advance their knowledge of Tsi Niionkwarihò:ten.

### **Approval**

- 10.1 In the event of any conflict or inconsistency between any provisions of this document and the *MCK Election Law*, the *MCK Election Law* supersedes such provisions.
- 10.2 This document shall come into force upon the passing of a Mohawk Council Executive Directive (MCED) and will replace any previous versions of the *Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke Terms of Reference for the Ietsénhaienhs/Ratsénhaienhs* and the *Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke Terms of Reference for the Ohén:ton Í:iente/Í:rate ne Ratitsénhaienhs*.
- 10.3 This document and any subsequent amendments will be approved by a MCED.

### **Review**

- 11.1 The Ratitsénhaienhs will undertake a review of this document three (3) months prior to the end of their term of office, led by the Ohén:ton Í:iente/Í:rate ne Ratitsénhaienhs.
- 11.2 The newly elected Ratitsénhaienhs will undertake a further review of the document within three (3) months of being elected.
- 11.3 Any amendments made will be reviewed by at least a minimum of three (3) member Governance Advisory Team for eventual validation by the community. In the event that no such advisory group is available, the amendments will be posted for a 30-day feedback period before being approved.

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