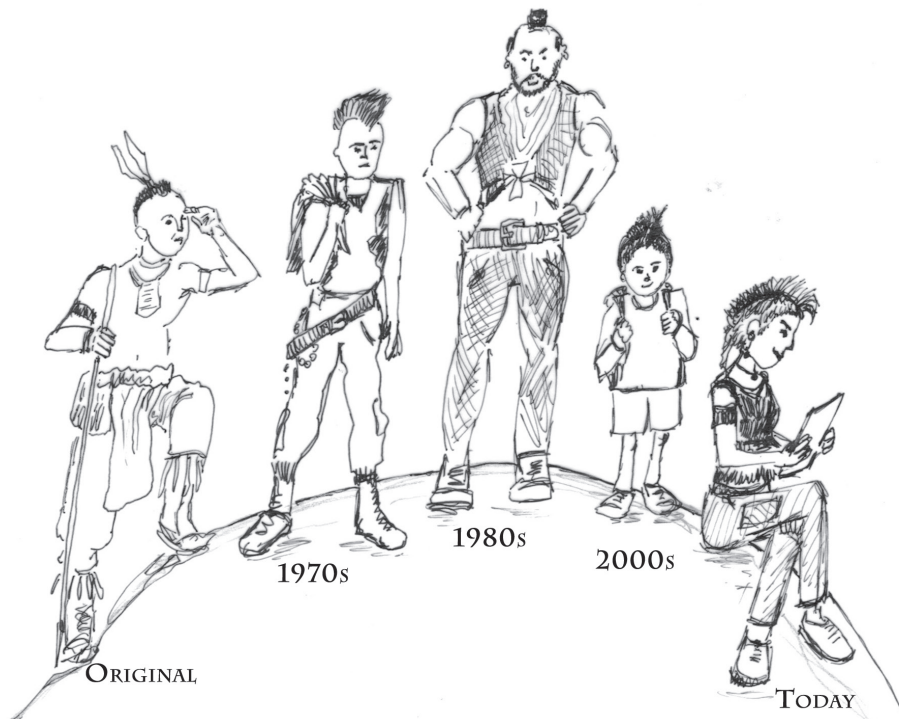


# Mohawk Culture

## The History Behind the Hairdo

by Simone T. Ribke



**Nowadays, you probably know a few kids with a mohawk. But did you know there's a history behind the hairdo?**

The mohawk hairstyle is named after the Native American tribe. Before battle, Mohawk warriors shaved the sides of their heads. They left a thin strip of hair down the middle.

The name Mohawk comes from a name their enemies called them. That name meant “man-eaters.” This does not really mean that

they ate people. It means that they were fierce warriors. The Mohawk’s name for themselves means “people of the flint.”

Mohawks were members of the Iroquois Confederacy. This was a nation that formed in the 1600s. It was made up of five different Indian tribal nations. A sixth tribal nation

---

# Mohawk Culture

---

joined the Confederacy in 1722. Members of the Iroquois Confederacy lived in and around Pennsylvania, New York, and Canada. Tribes that were part of the Confederacy refer to themselves as Iroquois today.

In the book *Eagle Song*, Danny Bigtree’s family most likely was Mohawk. Danny mentions missing his old home in a town called Akwesasne. This is a town in New York. Akwesasne is located in what once was Mohawk territory.

## A Fierce Reputation



Men (and sometimes women) began to wear mohawks in the 1970s. In those days, a mohawk was a pretty extreme hairstyle. It was usually only worn by punks.

Punks and punk rock came on the scene in the 1970s. Punks

rebelled against “normal” ways of dressing and behaving. They wore clothes, makeup, and hairstyles that were shocking and sometimes weird. Punk music was also fierce and shocking. By the 1980s, mohawks became more commonplace. But people with mohawks had a reputation for being fierce.

How did the mohawk hairstyle get a fierce reputation? Was it because of punk behavior? Or was it because of the origins of the hairdo? The answer is: probably both.

## From Punk to Funk

The mohawk hairstyle all but disappeared for nearly 25 years. It popped up again in the early 2000s. Suddenly everyone—kids, adults, even grandparents—wanted a mohawk. The mohawk was still considered fierce. But the word fierce now has a new meaning: well-dressed and good looking. Not bad for a hairdo that dates back before the discovery of America!

