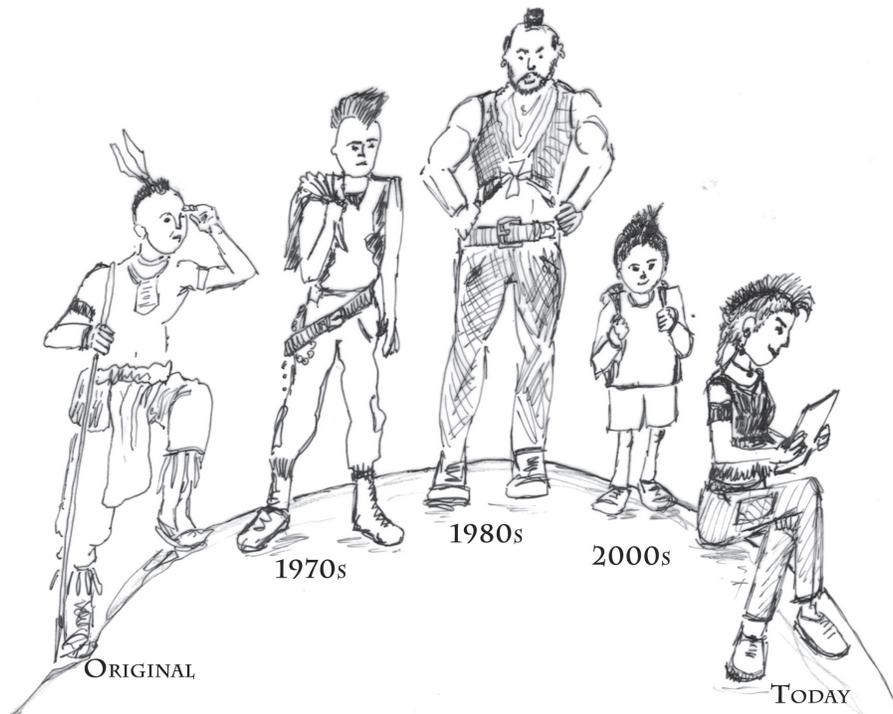


# Mohawk Culture

## The History Behind the Hairdo

by Simone T. Ribke



**Nowadays, you’re bound to see a handful of kids at school 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, leaving a thin strip of hair down the middle.

The name Mohawk comes from a name their enemies called them, meaning “man-eaters.” The term man-eaters 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 and was made up of five different Indian tribal nations. A sixth tribal nation joined the Confederacy in

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1722. Members of the Iroquois Confederacy lived in and around Pennsylvania, New York, and Canada. Tribes that were part of the Confederacy largely 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, which is in New York. Akwesasne is located in what once was Mohawk territory.

## A Fierce Reputation



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

and punk rock were a cultural and musical movement. 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, shocking, and different. By the 1980s, people with mohawks had a reputation for being fierce as well.

Was it punk behavior or the origins of the hairstyle that gave mohawks a fierce reputation? The answer is that it was probably both.

## From Punk to Funk

The mohawk hairstyle all but disappeared for nearly 25 years, but then it made a comeback 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!

