

Elected council's should bench themselves

A commentary by Teyowisonte (Thomas Deer)
teyowisonte@hotmail.com

In a joint statement made by the various elected councils in Mohawk country, it was publicly noted that such bodies reject the recent judgments made by the Supreme Court of Canada regarding *Mitchell vs. MNR*. The joint statement, which attempts to speak on the behalf of all “Mohawk people of the Mohawk Nation”, rejects the Supreme Court of Canada’s firm stance regarding the sovereign supremacy of Canada over the Mohawk Nation. Moreover, they also made it known that they reject Chief Justice Binnie’s referral of the Two Row Wampum as a “nautical metaphor”. It concludes by declaring that the Supreme Court’s decision will not deter Mohawk people from exercising their sovereign rights and resolves that they shall “reject the imposition of the unilateral assertions” made by the Supreme Court of Canada. This statement was a product of the summit of elected councils, which mind you, was a political gathering that was closed to the public and secured by Peacekeepers.

While most of their assertions somewhat parallel that of the Mohawk Nation’s existing positions and the opinion of this author, I must relay that I am quite offended by the naïve and ignorant declarations made by these hypocritical institutions. If the Mohawk Council of Kahnawake (MCK) will not recognize and respect the sovereign authority of the Mohawk Nation and its inherent institutions, then why should they expect Canada to? It is clear that the MCK, among the other elected councils, place great disrespect upon what they called the “sacred Two Row Wampum”, as it is continuously contradicted and slandered upon with disgraces such as the 1995 Policing Agreement, the Q/KR, and the proposed C/KR; whereby unauthorized bodies enter into agreements with foreign entities that ultimately establishes a separate non-national jurisdiction over inherent claims and resources.

Despite what the MCK tells the community, the Mohawk Nation does in indeed have a working central governing body called the Mohawk Nation Council of Chiefs, and although it may not have the financial and human resources to maintain a elaborate administration; this political institution has continued to endure after centuries as the inherent government of all Kanien’kehá:ka. This governing institution rightfully has the jurisdiction to negotiate on behalf of or sanction any agreement reached between its communities and any foreign entity as this body is the inherent custodian of all political, economic, and geographical jurisdictions. The MCK, among other elected councils, have outright ignored the resolutions passed by our own national government; thus demonstrating their disrespect for the sovereign integrity of the Mohawk Nation.

Members of the MCK constantly state that whether we like it or not, Canada does not recognize any other governing body for the Kanien’kehá:ka; and for that reason they will continue to act in the interest of all Mohawks of Kahnawake. Furthermore, they state that they will only yield their negotiating responsibilities when the Mohawk Nation “comes back”. By maintaining this naïve attitude towards the Mohawk Nation only supports the Supreme Court’s determinations, as the MCK does not exhibit confidence into their own convictions. This lack of respect for the authority of existing traditional institutions only diminishes the sovereign integrity of the Mohawk Nation as its strength is found in unity and confidence.

Indeed this argument can be made against the traditional bodies in Kahnawake as they are currently in disarray and unequipped to efficiently govern Kahnawake. However they fail to mention and encourage the healing process that the Haudenosaunee at Kahnawake are currently undergoing and the significant progress that has been made. These insensitive statements only make it harder for the Haudenosaunee at Kahnawake to come together and attempt to further justify the MCK's paternalistic claim of political authority over those who, who by example, reject the Indian Act and Canada's colonial policies. It must be recognized that such statements are only smokescreens designed to distract Kahnawa'kehró:non from questioning the MCK's real basis of authority which emits from the Indian Act and not the people.

Aside from those dependants who rely on the MCK to quench their desire for material progress, it should now be apparent to the majority of Kanien'kehá:ka who demand tangible sociopolitical and economic progress, that the elected councils in Mohawk country are doing more harm than good in our struggle to be an independent and sovereign nation. As a proposed resolve, this author suggests that the MCK should bench itself and shelf any current external political initiatives (i.e. CK/R) and intangible economic endeavors. They should then focus on aiding the community in its return towards a unified Mohawk Nation government by reopening real dialogue with Kahnawake's traditional people. In the meantime, Kahnawake's traditional people should now convene and prepare various draft political models that will be eventually proposed to the community for its consideration.

Indeed, when a solid foundation of community governance is created in combination with a confident constituency under an umbrella national unity and the Kaianere'kó:wa; only then can negotiations commence utilizing the concepts contained in certain "nautical metaphors" to fight for our control over inherent rights and resources. We are constantly warned by the MCK that if Kahnawake embraces this scenario, Canada could sever its fiduciary responsibility to us. Indeed, this warning can only be labeled as a scare tactic to avoid losing its constituency and consolidate its forced authority. This author, among others, isn't afraid of either poverty or struggle as integrity and liberty are well rooted in such humble settings. Everyone has a place in the struggle; it's a matter of everyone being on the same page.

Ever onward towards the good tidings of peace & power!