



Kahnawà:ke Ratitsénhaiens

Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke

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Enhsakotò:kénhte Nitiotié:ren Tsi Ietsenhaiéntákhwa

Tsi Nahóten Karihwanákere No'nenk News Release

MCK Chief to Meet with INAC Official re: Status Card Issue

For immediate release

(Kahnawà:ke – 6, Onerahtohkó:wa/May 2008) Chief Mike Bush will meet with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) official Ray Hatfield in Ottawa tomorrow. Chief Bush will be hand-delivering a written response by Grand Chief Michael Ahrírhon Delisle, Jr. (see attachment) that addresses Kahnawà:ke's disgust with Mr. Hatfield's letter dated April 27, 2009, in which he advises our people to "obtain alternative documentation" when crossing the border.

On 1, Ohiarí:ha/June the current Indian Status cards will not be accepted as identification when crossing the border into the United States. Earlier this year, INAC announced that new "secure" Certificates of Indian Status would be produced that would be acceptable for this purpose. INAC has announced that it "is not in a position to deliver" these Certificates before the deadline.

"There are no words to adequately convey our disappointment and anger at this latest development," said Grand Chief Delisle in the letter.

The Grand Chief's letter will be sent to all parties who have any involvement with the issue at hand, including the Department of Homeland Security.

The Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke would like to inform the community that every effort is being made to address this issue.

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For further information, please contact:
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STRENGTH

PEACE

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05, Onerahtohkó:wa/May 2009

Mr. Ray Hatfield, Director General
Individual Affairs
Indian & Northern Affairs Canada
10 Wellington Street
Gatineau, Quebec K1A 0H4

She:kon,

I am writing in response to your letter dated April 27, 2009 regarding the Certificate of Indian Status cards.

The Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke is extremely concerned about both INAC's late notification and the included recommendation ("INAC is recommending that individuals who currently rely on their Certificate of Indian Status to cross the border obtain alternative documentation.").

While we can understand that there have been challenges in regard to meeting the demands of the United States World Hemisphere Travel Initiative, it is most disturbing that, for the past several months, we have been led to believe that all was proceeding according to plan and that we would encounter no problems as the June 1st deadline approached. In fact, the MCK worked *together* with local INAC officials to ensure that the new "secure" certificates would reach our people before the deadline. Imagine our outrage when, instead, we receive your letter.

The Mohawks have always maintained that the Canada/United States border is not ours. Iroquoian Territory stretches from what is now New York State, northward into Quebec and Ontario and westward as far as Green Bay, Wisconsin. The Mohawks, specifically, have always been known as the Keepers of the Eastern Door. We have fought to maintain our right to live and work anywhere throughout our traditional Territory.

In 1926, Kahnawà:ke's Paul K. Diabo won a significant court victory where it was determined that the rights of our people, the Haudenosaunee, to cross the border between the United States and Canada are recognized in international treaties.

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For you and your government, the solution to your current problem seems easy enough: have our people get a passport or enhanced driver's license. But it is not that simple. This is a situation that is unacceptable on a number of levels of which you have been made aware by at least one of Kahnawà:ke's chiefs as well as the Iroquois Caucus. Most obvious is that INAC has been derelict in its responsibility to the very people it was created to assist. What little trust remains between the Mohawks of Kahnawà:ke and Ottawa is now at grave risk. INAC has made little effort to keep us informed as to the tenuous nature of the border-crossing developments; indeed, we have been assured that "all is well." But all is not well. We are not privy to discussions that may – or may not – have taken place between Canadian and American officials that involve our inherent right.

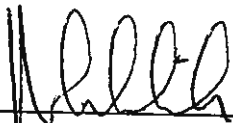
The recommended action is indeed an imposition on those who had, in good faith, placed their trust in INAC. A significant number of those affected are ironworkers, elders and ex-military personnel who cross the border for business purposes with some frequency. The elders and those who do not hold drivers licenses are finding themselves in an unfortunate, uncomfortable and unacceptable position.

There are no words to adequately convey our disappointment and anger at this latest development.

I await your immediate response.

Nia:wen,

MOHAWK COUNCIL OF KAHNAWAKE



Grand Chief Michael Ahrihrhon Delisle Jr.