



Kahnawà:ke Ratitsénhaiens

Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke

P.O. Box 720 Kahnawà:ke Mohawk Territory JOL 1B0

Phone: (450) 632-7500 Fax: (450) 638-5958

Web Site: www.Kahnawake.com E-mail: communications@mck.ca

Enhsakotò:kénhte Nitiotié:ren Tsi Ietsenhaientákhwa

Tsi Nahóten Karihwanákere No'nenk News Release

MCK issues update statement on Education issues

(Kahnawake – 12 Seskehkó:wa/September 2012) The Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke (MCK) is issuing a statement to the community outlining many of the reasons for its decision to temporarily suspend the authority of the Kahnawake Combined Schools Committee and the Constitution.

The three page statement (attached), signed by Grand Chief Michael Ahríhron Delisle, Jr. on behalf of the MCK, also includes a response to the aggressive tone of the "Proclamation" document that was published in last week's *Eastern Door* newspaper in which direct threats were made against Education Center staff and the MCK. This type of behavior is contrary to our way of resolving disputes and is unacceptable.

The MCK has authorized an Interim Board of Trustees to work towards addressing and correcting problems related to the Constitution. One of the biggest problems facing the parents is the confusion caused by having several different Constitution documents circulating. The Interim Board of Trustees, which consists of Rheena Skye-Diabo, Franklin Williams, the three school principals and special advisor (and former Director of Education) Mike Diabo, will be consulting with the parents and community to update the Constitution in a manner that addresses today's needs while reflecting and respecting the intent of the original Constitution.

Once that is completed, Education will once again be administered using a properly ratified Constitution.

-30-

Contact:

Joe Delaronde, Political Press Attaché

Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke

450-632-7500 ext. 2254 or joe.delaronde@mck.ca

STRENGTH

PEACE

UNITY

Mohawk Council of Kahnawake

P.O. Box 720
Kahnawake Mohawk Territory J0L 1B0

Tsi Ietsenhaientáhkwawa
" OFFICE OF THE COUNCIL OF CHIEFS "



Tel.: (450) 632-7500

Fax: (450) 632-7276

Website: www.kahnawake.com

12, Seskehkó:wa/September 2012

Statement from the Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke on Education

The Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke (MCK) has had to make a very difficult decision recently regarding the temporary suspension of the authority of the Kahnawake Combined Schools Committee (KCSC). After many meetings with people from all sides of the issue (including the KCSC), a great deal of deliberation and much debate, it became clear to Council chiefs that there was no longer a choice in the matter, with 11 of 12 Chiefs supporting the decision.

The MCK regrets that its decision has caused such an emotional response by some of the original members of the KCSC. However, it is clear that something had to be done to protect the rights of the children and (mostly) young adults who comprise the student population. The MCK is NOT taking away the voice of the parents in regards to education but, rather, taking unpopular and painful measures for the common good. Once the issues are addressed and problems corrected the education system and parents' authority on the KCSC will revert back to administering our children's education with a Constitution that is updated to meet today's needs while reflecting and respecting the intent of the original Constitution.

The MCK must correct some misleading and incorrect information regarding the MCK portfolio chiefs. It is unclear to the MCK how Chiefs Kenneth McComber and Kahsennenhawe Sky-Deer could be accused of being 'disruptive,' as described in a full page advertisement placed in the Eastern Door ('Proclamation of Parental Control over Kahnawake Education') by a different group of 'concerned parents, guardians and community members' who gathered on August 30th and September 5th. Additionally, Chief Sky-Deer did not recommend or put forth the names of Rheena Skye-Diabo or Ka'nahsohon Deer as Interim Trustees. The suggestion of Rheena Skye-Diabo was brought forth by parents at the May 15th meeting where other parents attempted to suspend the KCSC. Ka'nahsohon Deer is one of the three principals and, thus, was asked to sit on the interim board due to his position – as were Joyce Diabo and Arlie Goodleaf and former Director of Education Mike Diabo. The principals were asked to participate due to their roles as administrators and for the purposes of consistency and continuity. Chief Sky-Deer has indicated to her colleagues that she will step away from the education file once portfolios are assigned to help correct any perceived conflict of interest.

It is vitally important that people stop acting in an emotional manner but, rather, with calm, patience and wisdom. Certain people have spent a great deal of energy accusing the MCK of wrongdoing, yet these same people have come up with little in the way of solutions, other than to say 'education belongs in the hands of the parents.' While, on the surface, this seems to be a simple solution, the reality is one that is more complicated.

The last thing the MCK wants to do is get involved in a situation that it regards as the direct domain of the parents. But the atmosphere of distrust that continues to permeate cannot be allowed to continue, lest it create divisions within the community that cannot be bridged. We must stop this poor behavior. The children look up to us, and we all need to do a better job of being proper role models.

In closing, we must reiterate that the actions that have been taken are not about 'power' but, rather, to find solutions. While many people find it convenient to blame the MCK for anything and everything, the situation festered for many months before the MCK reluctantly took measures necessary to offer some stability to the situation. And, since many say they do not trust the MCK, we must remind the community that the Interim Board of Trustees consists of extremely competent and highly-respected community members – none of whom work for the MCK. We must trust that, with their level of expertise, they will be able to quickly complete their tasks and allow for a smooth transition back to full parents' authority.

Finally, there are a number of issues that need to be clarified, in order for people to truly understand the reasons for the decision:

1. The MCK – on behalf of the community – has a vested interest in education, as the vast majority of dollars are passed through the MCK to the Kahnawake Education Center, who administers the funds. The MCK is responsible to ensure that monies are spent appropriately – the Education Center presents its annual budget to the MCK. In the case of shortfalls, the Education Center must apply to the MCK to cover shortfalls or deficits. **It is incumbent on the Education Center to ensure that all proper practices and procedures are followed, whether the matter is fiscal, educational or human resource related.** The final responsibility lies with the MCK to ensure that this is done. In this instance, there is a question as to whether the Combined Schools Committee followed proper practices and procedures. Without an independent review it is extremely difficult to determine whether the actions taken by the KCSC are defensible and, without this vital knowledge, there is no assurance that any problems can be corrected and prevented in the future. That is the main reason why the MCK strongly supports the independent review.
2. All parties have pointed out that the Constitution is a very large problem, yet no one had taken any concrete steps to address the issue. The main focus of the Interim Board of Trustees is to ensure that the Constitution is put in order, as there are several different documents circulating within the community. **This has caused a great deal of confusion, which is one of the greatest factors in the on-going dispute.** The Interim Board of Trustees will consult with the various stakeholders and the community to ensure the Constitution is the actual reflection of the Will of the People.
3. There is also a need to update and clarify the *Education Responsibilities Act*, the policy document which is used as a guide by the KCSC.
4. The Interim Board of Trustees does not take direction from the MCK. It will report on its progress to the MCK but all decisions are taken by the Trustees.

5. The MCK has been accused of withholding information from the community. While the MCK compiled an extensive file on this issue, the main reason for not making the information available was to give the parents, administrators, and KCSC time to resolve the issue without the MCK adding to the problems. Due to the failure of the parties to solve the problems, the MCK is now in a position to present the information on which it based its decision to the community. Any and all relevant information will be made available to give the community assurance that the MCK is not acting in a manner that could be considered rushed or uninformed.
6. Finally, the series of threats against Education Center staff in the September 6th 'Proclamation' is deplorable and unacceptable. Additionally, the closing statement, "Please consider this your second warning" is completely contrary to the spirit of what this community stands for and is nothing more than an exercise in bullying that cannot be tolerated. While the group that has signed this 'Proclamation' has a right to its opinion, they must be reminded that there are a great number of parents who have a different opinion – otherwise we would not be in this position today. These parents, while unhappy, have not resorted to threats.

If there are any questions related to this statement, we invite you to contact the Chiefs at 450.632.7500 at your convenience.

In Peace and Friendship,

Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke