

# MOHAWK COUNCIL OF AKWESASNE

Sustaining our inherent rights, facing challenges together, and building a strong and healthy future.



## OFFICE OF THE GRAND CHIEF

Kentenhko:wa/November 1, 2019

Watkwanonhwera:ton/Greetings,

I hope that October was a productive month for you and that your family is doing well.

Throughout the past month, there has been a lot of activity within the Canadian Federal Government, during the election campaign and then with the actual federal election. It should be noted that while, for the most part, many of our community members choose to not participate in the federal election, the election results will always have an impact on our community. Once a federal election is called (AKA 'drop the writ'), the federal government ceases to have non-essential meetings outside of the government. Outside of these essential meetings, the government representatives will not make *any* decisions. This results in delays at the very least, and any lobbying efforts or joint initiatives that were underway could potentially be dead in the water, depending on the election outcome.

Over the past four years, the Trudeau Liberal Government made significant investments into First Nation communities. Despite any faults of the Liberal government, they have been the only Federal Government in my time as a District Chief and now as Grand Chief that have made Indigenous issues a high priority. Throughout their past term, Akwesasne received upwards of \$1 million in extra funding to build homes and this translated into more apartments in Snye. The Department of Technical Services received over \$8 million in new capital projects, which supported Buckshot Road, River Road, and the School Road wastewater plant. Over \$5 million was received for child welfare prevention, and there is now Canadian legislation that complements the development of an Akwesasne Child Welfare Law. While these are only a few examples, prior to the Trudeau Liberal Government, the MCA had been challenged by financial cutbacks and much less complementary legislation.

Soon, the Federal Government will assign new or existing Ministers to the various departments and portfolios. Once that process is complete, we will then resume our meetings and lobbying efforts with the Federal Government. This new government has a Liberal minority, so they may not be as forthcoming in making the same level of investments because now they will have to gain support from the other government parties to pass the budget. Regardless, we will continue to work with the government to meet our community's needs.

In closing I wish you a great month ahead. Please don't forget that the **2019/2020 Akwesasne Heating Assistance Program deadline is Friday, December 13, 2019 at 4:00 pm**. Attached, you will find my monthly report for your update and read.

Sken:nen

Abram Benedict  
Grand Chief

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## **Grand Chief Monthly Activity Report Seskehko:wa/September 2019**

### **SEPTEMBER 4-5, 2019 AFN CANNABIS**

I traveled to Vancouver to participate in the First Nations Cannabis Summit hosted by the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) from September 4-5, 2019. British Columbia Regional Chief Terry Teegee welcomed the participants and provided an overview of the summit. Legal counsel for the AFN provided a brief presentation on the Federal Cannabis Act and explained that the provinces and territories are responsible for the licensing of dispensaries and that Health Canada is responsible for licensing cannabis producers. Following the presentation, a number of First Nations discussed their approaches to the cannabis industry. Many First Nations explained that they were not entering into agreements with the provinces but were in the process of developing their own community laws. Some First Nations have created partnerships with licensed growers and placed production facilities on reserve. The common theme for many of the communities is the drive to create jobs and economic prosperity for their Nations. Over the course of the two days a number of presentations were provided on the opportunities in partnerships. Representatives from Seven Leaf Medical Cannabis presented on their long process of becoming a Health Canada licensed medical cannabis facility. Following each presentation at the summit, Chiefs and participants were able to ask the presenters questions and have dialogue on various approaches and strategies. The AFN was heavily criticized for not becoming involved sooner, prior to the Federal Cannabis Act becoming law. The AFN was also criticized for taxation being levied on First Nation communities who chose to be licensed by the province or Health Canada. As a result of attending the summit, the Akwesasne delegation was able to learn about the various cannabis industry experiences of First Nations across Canada.

## **SEPTEMBER 9, 2019 COUNCIL MEETING**

- Representatives from Entewatatha:wi and the Aboriginal Rights and Research Office (ARRO) provided Council with an update and overview of the Akwesasne draft Additions to Reserve (ATR) Policy.
- The manager of ARRO briefed Council on a short-term investment strategy for consideration.
- Council set the agenda for the General Meeting being hosted in Kana:takon on September 26.
- A request for sponsorship for an upcoming curling championship was reviewed and denied.
- Council discussed a request from Indigenous Sport & Wellness Ontario (ISWO) and determined we will not be the host community for an upcoming tournament.
- A request for a letter of support was discussed and will be handled by administration.
- Council identified Chief Roundpoint to attend an upcoming Parkinson Canada Super Walk occurring this weekend.
- A request for a Section 95 Justice Officiant for an upcoming marriage was discussed and approved.
- Council discussed the supports allowed under the AMBE Post-Secondary Student Support Program.
- A community concern regarding the Environmental Health Officer and a recent visit was discussed and followed up on by administration.
- Council identified Chief Tim Thompson as next week's Chair in the Grand Chief's absence.
- MCRs passed: Approval of reappointment of Justices to the Akwesasne Mohawk Court; Approval of 7 upgrade loans to community members; Approval of Education Savings Plan for child in care; Approval of draft agreement with ISC for the establishment of a process for the restoration of lands to Akwesasne working group; Approval of short term investment strategy for settlement funds; Approval of award of construction contract to Lazore's Construction for Birch Road; Approval of project and funding for Birch Road water main; Approval of

assignment of lease on Hamilton Island; Approval of assignment of lease on Stanley Island; Approval of 2 amendments to Canada Akwesasne funding agreement; Approval of agreement for Shoreline Health Assessment; Approval of Wetlands project phase 1; Approval of transfer of investment funds to CIBC, Approval of 5 meeting minutes.

### **SEPTEMBER 10, 2019 CITY OF CORNWALL GOLF TOURNAMENT**



On September 10, 2019 I was invited to participate in the Team Cornwall annual golf tournament. I was teamed up with Cornwall Mayor Bernadette Clement. Proceeds from the tournament support various charities in the City of Cornwall and area.

### **SEPTEMBER 10, 2019 FIRST RESPONDERS HONORING**

On the evening of September 10, 2019 the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne hosted a First Responders Appreciation Dinner and recognition event at the Anowarako:wa Arena. We began the evening with a traditional meal and opening remarks from the MCA Executive Director followed by my own remarks on behalf of Council. Chief Adams-Phillips and Chief Adams provided a historical snapshot of the development of the Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service, the Akwesasne Mohawk Ambulance, and the Hogansburg Akwesasne Volunteer Fire Department. They noted that all along the way, the community has always worked together to ensure the needs of the community were met and public safety was always paramount. The evening ended with all the First Responders in attendance signing the Book of Recognition that was started several years ago by former Kawehno:ke District Chief Troy Thompson. We commend all the First Responders in Akwesasne and thank them for their hard work and commitment to our community.

## **SEPTEMBER 11, 2019 CANNABIS MEETING**

On September 11, 2019 our internal Cannabis committee met to review the recently received applications under the Interim Cannabis Regulations. The committee began the internal process of reviewing the applications earlier in July and will continue their reviews. Follow-up with applicants will take place where and when required.

## **SEPTEMBER 11, 2019 IAKHISOHTHA RESIDENTS RETURN TO WALMART**



Back in July of 2019, Elders who reside at Iakhihsohta experienced an unwelcomed situation at Walmart in the City of Cornwall. The Iakhihsohta staff received unruly treatment from bystanders while unloading the Elders at the front of Walmart. Following this incident, the staff and Elders vowed to not return to Walmart Cornwall until Walmart acknowledged the treatment and apologized. On September 11, 2019 members of our Council accompanied staff and Elders of Iakhihsohta to Walmart Cornwall. We were welcomed and greeted by the Co-Manager of the store. The Co-Manager apologized to the staff and Elders on behalf of Walmart for the incident and treatment received back in July. The staff and Elders accepted the apology from the Co-Manager then proceeded to enjoy their shopping trip at Walmart Cornwall.

## **SEPTEMBER 12, 2019 CBSA/MCA DESIGN THINKING INITIATIVE**

On the morning of September 12, 2019 Council met with senior leadership representatives of the Canada Border Service Agency (CBSA) regarding the implementation of the Design Thinking Initiative. We began the meeting with an overview of the Design Thinking Initiative report and an overview of the Chiefs identified to assist with making technical recommendations to the leadership table. The technical committees are divided into four committees to examine: the domestic issues, the recruitment of new Border Service Officers (BSO), implementations of an Indigenous Liaison Position, and communications. We discussed the process for the technical table to make recommendations to the leadership table and agreed that the technical tables will work through the technical aspects for consideration. The meeting of September 12 was to introduce the MCA identified representatives to the process for decision making and working through the technical aspects of the file. The technical committees have scheduled future meetings to begin the work.

## **SEPTEMBER 12, 2019 CALL WITH TELUS MOBILITY**

On September 12, 2019 the Acting Director of Tehotiennawakon and I participated on a call with Telus Mobility regarding the ongoing negotiations for the Mohawk Council to consent to the sale of the Telus Mobility tower on Kawehno:ke to Bell Mobility. On the call of September 12 we reviewed the current contribution for the occupancy of the tower and the direct community contribution. Telus Mobility agreed to our terms for the permission and the community contribution. We will continue to work with Telus and Bell Mobility for the successful transfer of the ownership once all the requirements of the MCA have been satisfied.

## **SEPTEMBER 16, 2019 BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES SYMPOSIUM**

On the afternoon of September 16, 2019 I attended a half day symposium on the Ecosystem Services Global Assessment on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and it's the implications to the Great Lakes region.



The invite to attend this symposium was extended by Ontario Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth Dowdeswell. Eduardo Brondizio of Indiana University was the keynote speaker. He discussed the Global Assessment report and highlighted the areas that effect the Great Lakes. A number of professors from various universities discussed biodiversity impacts to the Great Lakes. The Mayor of Toledo, Ohio talked about the politics of trying to mitigate algal blooms which are effecting the Ohio River. The

symposium discussed the various impacts of algal blooms around the Great Lakes and the many factors that are effecting government policy and mitigation. The Lieutenant Governor wrapped up by thanking the participants and encouraged the participants to engage with local governments on the protection of the Great Lakes.

### **SEPTEMBER 17, 2019 COO ELECTION STRATEGY**

The Chiefs of Ontario hosted an Election Strategy Think Tank session on September 17, 2019. The Ontario Regional Chief discussed the upcoming federal election and explained that the Chiefs of Ontario wanted to ensure the communities were well equipped to make informed decisions on election day. The meeting provided the opportunity for leadership and technicians to brainstorm on the current federal political environment and to collect some initial insight and intel from each of the participants on their local realities and aspirations politically, both during and after the federal election. The Chiefs of Ontario reviewed a Federal Election Toolkit that was developed by COO. The toolkit highlighted current party platforms and candidates and also highlighted First Nations candidates. The participants debated heavily whether or not communities should participate in the Canadian Federal Election as well as which party supported the communities.

## **SEPTEMBER 19, 2019 PRE-RECORDED CKON TALK SHOW SESSION ON NATURAL GAS**

On September 19, 2019 our energy consultant Peter Valiquet and I attended the CKON station to pre-record a Tetewatharen session on the proposed Natural Gas Expansion onto Kawehno:ke. We provided a brief background on the project and what is being proposed to the district. We outlined all the work that's been done to educate the community including the various information sessions that were held and the presentations that were made over the past year to ensure that the community is aware of the proposed project. We explained that we began a community survey of the residents of the Kawehno:ke to determine whether or not they support the project and would connect to natural gas should it become available. The pre-recorded talk show session also invited the community to an open house set for Tuesday, October 29 from 4-7 pm at the Anowarako:wa Arena, with Enbridge representatives scheduled to attend.

## **SEPTEMBER 19, 2019 MEETING WITH AMBE TRUSTEES**

On the evening of September 19, 2019 members of Council met with the elected trustees of the Ahkwesahsne Mohawk Board of Education



(AMBE) for the first time. Council wanted to have an introductory meeting and receive an update on the board structural readiness work currently being done. The Director of Education explained that AMBE had submitted a proposal to Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) to conduct a review and assessment of the AMBE structure and

make recommendations on areas that need to be strengthened in order to become an autonomous school board. The director explained that the review and capacity development would be conducted over



several years so that AMBE can ensure the community is aware and supportive and that the structural improvements can be made.

### **SEPTEMBER 20, 2019 CANNABIS REVIEW**

On the morning of September 20, 2019 our internal Cannabis Committee met again to continue to review applications received under the interim Cannabis Regulations. The review process will be ongoing.

### **SEPTEMBER 23, 2019 COUNCIL MEETING**

- The MCA Justice Coordinator provided Council with an overview of a funding proposal and options for the proposal in relation to the scope of work; Council will consider the approach at a later date.
- MCA Acting Comptroller provided Council with an overview of the historical spending and current reserves for the Ontario Lottery Gaming revenues formerly know as Casino Rama Dollars.
- Council was briefed on the MCA Heating Assistance Program and determined that the residency eligibility criteria would remain the same as last year.
- A briefing was provided on an ongoing land dispute; further policy research will be done and reported back to Council.
- Council agreed to a follow up session from the Council retreat; a location will be secured.
- A briefing was provided on the concern regarding the lack of Akwesasne signage on the Hopkins Point property, further information will be researched.
- Council was briefed on efforts to secure funding for road reconstruction.
- MCRs passed: Approval to rescind previous MCR approving a repair loan; Approval to award contract for site preparation to Akwesasne Earth Movers for the Akwesasne Family Wellness Program facility expansion; Approval to place a new Stop Sign in Kana:takon at 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and Angus Thomas; Approval for the implementation of the Political Service Contract; Approval of MCA 2018/19 Audit of schedule of revenue and expenses.

## **SEPTEMBER 23-24, 2019 ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS (AFN) ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON CLIMATE ACTION AND THE ENVIRONMENT (ACCAE)**

On the afternoon of September 23, I attended the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Advisory Committee on Climate Action and the Environment (ACCAE) meeting in Ottawa. I arrived late at the meeting due to having to participate in our Council meeting earlier in the day. The committee received presentations and updates on the climate impacts to the Porcupine Caribou in the north. The Boreal Caribou Knowledge Consortium is an organization that is committed to ensuring Canadians are aware of the real time impacts in the north. AFN staff provided an overview of the Convention on Biological Diversity and how it relates to the caribou. The committee discussed Chronic Wasting Disease and the dangers associated with this disease. The final presentation for the evening was done on Species at Risk. The committee meeting continued on September 24. AFN Senior Policy Analysts discussed Canada's Bill C-69 and explained that this bill modernized the National Energy Board (NEB) Act in an effort to ensure the former NEB board operated more independent and reflective of that principal. Dr. Diana Lewis presented to the committee on an Indigenous Value-Based Approach to Human Health Risk Assessments. Updates were provided on the development of a First Nations Climate Strategy and on the coordination of a National Climate Gathering. Representatives from Pathway to Canada Target 1 updated the committee on the initiative and discussed the path forward to working collaboratively with First Nation communities. A briefing was provided to the committee on the upcoming election and what each party platform included for Climate Change and the environment.

## **SEPTEMBER 26, 2019 CANADA POST**

On the afternoon of September 26, 2019 I met with the Cornwall and Hawkesbury regional manager for Canada Post. Earlier in September I had reached out to the Regional Manager to discuss concerns and issues with mail delivery to Akwesasne. I explained to the representative that we have received concerns from the community

that in situations where there are more mailboxes than homes Canada Post has refused to deliver the mail. Canada Post has also refused to deliver mail to homes that have been burned out. I explained to the representatives that for various reasons community members don't always follow through on change of addresses. It was explained that Canada Post policy states that mail can only be delivered to home and business that are habitable. I requested copies of the policies so that we can further explain this to the community. I also addressed concerns with delivery of medical cannabis to various locations in Akwesasne. The representative committed to following up on the issues raised.

### **SEPTEMBER 26, 2019 GENERAL MEETING**

On the evening of September 26, 2019 Council hosted our monthly General Meeting at the Kana:takon Recreation Centre. A representative from the Aboriginal Rights and Research Office (ARRO) provided the community with a presentation on a proposed amendment to the Ontario Power Generation (OPG) Final Settlement Agreement. Following this presentation an update was provided to the community on the Dundee referendum appeals. We also introduced members of the Akwesasne Mohawk Police Commission to the community. Ending the evening we took Business from the Floor. The entire recording for the General Meeting can be found at: [https://youtu.be/urLcK\\_lmvYU](https://youtu.be/urLcK_lmvYU)

### **SEPTEMBER 27, 2019 MANAGEMENT MEETING**

On the afternoon of September 27, 2019 the MCA Executive Director and I met with representatives of MCA management. The representatives had reached out to me to meet and to further our conversation about amendments to the MCA General Personnel Policy (GPP) to accommodate management. At the meeting on September 27, we recapped the work that had been started with the former MCA Executive Director and committed to moving the collaboration along for a final recommendation to Council on proposed amendments to the GPP.

## **SEPTEMBER 30, 2019 COUNCIL MEETING**

- The manager for Nation Building Entewatatha:wi provided Council with an update and overview from a recent advisory meeting.
- Doctor Horn and Health Administration provided Council with an overview of midwifery programs in Ontario and Quebec.
- Council discussed the usage of Peace Tree Mall units and agreed that a MCR will need to be brought forward for Council's consideration.
- A briefing was provided on the previous year's Akwesasne Heating Assistance Program administration and deadlines; Council agreed that the program will begin taking applications from October 15 until December 13, 2019.
- Council was briefed on an upcoming community event for fall 2019 and agreed to extend a callout to the MCA organization to support a combined Winter Holiday fundraiser for each district recreation centre for 2019.
- A briefing was provided on upcoming proposed property sales; additional information will be presented at a future meeting.
- Council discussed a concern regarding burned out homes in the District of Kana:takon; current statistics will be relayed to the complainant.
- A concern regarding a complaint to the Cornwall Police was discussed and will be further followed up on.
- MCRs passed: Approval of amendment to Ministry of Health and Long Term Care funding agreement; Approval of 4 housing upgrade loans; Approval to rescind renovation loan (loan no longer needed); Approval of funding application for Climate Change funding; Approval of amendment to funding agreement between Akwesasne and Canada; Approval of Community Member to sit on Akwesasne Legislative Commission.