



*Office of the Grand Chief*

Ohiari:ha/June 1, 2021

Watkwanonhwera:ton/Greetings,

I hope this letter and report finds you and your family doing well on this first day of June. It's amazing that we have seen the weather change yet again, this time bringing back some cooler temperatures. Hopefully, our gardens are resilient enough to make it through such drastic temperature changes.

It's with great sadness that we've learned about the discovery of 215 lost children at an Indian Residential School in Kamloops, British Columbia. This terrible news is a painful reminder of the legacy and lasting effects residential schools continue to have on our people and communities. The Mohawk Council of Akwesasne lowered our flag in Kana:takon and offered tobacco for the families in British Columbia. We also acknowledged our survivors and the many families effected by residential schools; the recent discovery is a grim reminder of the pain our parents and Totas endured. You are all in our thoughts and prayers.

Now that June is here, the community of Akwesasne is preparing for the 2021 General Election of the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne. We saw new changes and the start of some exciting initiatives during the past three years of the current Council's term. There is no doubt that the global pandemic negatively effected progress and also brought new barriers and needs to light, but as the community government, we continue to move forward, striving to protect our community while making improvements to our everyday lives. On behalf of our Council, I want to thank all of you for the honor to serve you and our community. Niawen:kowa.

Last week we hosted the final General Meeting for the 2018-2021 term. The entire recording of last week's General Meeting can be found at: <https://youtu.be/vsGxBIyDFwo>. As always, my monthly report is attached for your information and review. I am available to discuss the items in this report or any other item by phone at 613-575-2250 or by e-mail at: [grand.chief@akwesasne.ca](mailto:grand.chief@akwesasne.ca). I hope that you have a wonderful month ahead.

Be safe and take care.

Sken:nen/Peace,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Abram Benedict', is written over a light blue circular stamp.

Abram Benedict  
Grand Chief



## **Grand Chief Monthly Activity Report Onerahtókha/April 2021**

### **APRIL 6, 13, 20, 27, 2021 BORDER PARTNERS MEETINGS**

On a weekly basis throughout the month of April, MCA's Public Safety Portfolio Chiefs, representatives from the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe and the Mohawk Nation Council of Chiefs, and I participated on weekly calls with the Port Directors for the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) and the United States Customs and Border Protection (USCBP). The calls occurred every Tuesday morning utilizing the Zoom platform. On these calls we receive regular updates from the Port Directors on current traffic volumes, any issues with local travelers, and reports of any customs officers that may be in quarantine for any reason. For the month of April, both USCBP and CBSA reported they each had one officer test positive and CBSA had 5 officers in quarantine due to exposure. These meetings also give our local governments the opportunity to provide relevant updates to the CBSA and USCBP representatives. During the month of April, we were also reminded that the US Dundee Port of Entry continues to close from 6 pm until 6 am each day.

### **APRIL 6, 13, 20, 27, 2021 EASTERN ONTARIO HEALTH UNIT**

Throughout April, I participated on weekly briefings provided by the Eastern Ontario Health Unit (EOHU) to receive updates from Dr. Paul Roumeliotis, the Medical Officer of Health and the Chief Executive Officer for the Eastern Ontario Health Unit. The audience for these Tuesday briefings consists of the heads of municipalities within the EOHU region. Throughout the month, Dr. Paul provided an update on vaccine roll-outs and explained the continued changes in the eligibility for vaccines, based on age categories. April 8<sup>th</sup> the province implemented the Stay-at-Home order and closed all non-essential

activities. The EOHU reported during the month of April that 72% of the cases in the region were due to the variants of concern and that this made EOHU one of the top 5 highest places for VOCs in Ontario.

### **APRIL 7, 14, 21, 28, 2021 WEEKLY COVID-19 MEETINGS**

On a weekly basis throughout the month of April, Council met with MCA's Administration to specifically discuss and receive updates on our response to COVID-19. These meetings provide an opportunity for Council to thoroughly discuss our current precautions and travel restrictions. While discussions may occur at length during these weekly Wednesday meetings, decision-making is reserved for the regular Council Meetings.

### **APRIL 12, 2021 COUNCIL MEETING UPDATE**

- The Human Resources Manager, Director of Finance and Administration, Director of Community and Social Services, and the Comptroller provided Council with an overview of the proposed agreement between the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), Akwesasne Child and Family Services (ACFS), and the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne (MCA).
- Council discussed the upcoming Seaway International Bridge Corporation (SIBC) project for the south channel bridge trolley replacement and agreed to send a letter to the contractors to remind them of our community COVID directives and the need for the unions to respect each union's jurisdiction.
- An update was provided on the upcoming vaccination clinics; Council agreed to brief next week after the walk in clinics are conducted.
- Council discussed the status of McDonald Road and other roads in need of repair. Portfolio agreed to follow up at the upcoming portfolio meeting. Follow up will also be done with the SRMT regarding the multi-jurisdictional situation, as it relates to McDonald Road.

- An update was provided on the status of the consultation for the Dundee proceeds. Full consultation will begin after the 2021 General Election.
- Council discussed the potential usage of off-reserve property as the permanent location of the Akwesasne Wellness Program.
- MCRs passed: Approval of assignment of lease on Hamilton Island; Approval of Letter of Understanding with South Stormont and Parks Canada; Approval of union agreement between the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE).

### **APRIL 12, 2021 CALL WITH ROGERS COMMUNICATIONS**

On April 12, 2021 I spoke with Kim Barrington, a representative of Roger Communications. Rogers was recently announced as a wireless partner with the Government of Canada, Ontario, and the Eastern Ontario Regional Network (EORN) to improve cellular coverage and capacity to rural communities across Eastern Ontario. On the call of April 12, 2021 Kim explained that she had been working for Rogers for a number of years and that she will be assisting with the project expansion. I explained to Kim that Kana:takon and Tsi Snaihne are the parts of the community that had the worst cellular phone connection and that we would like Rogers to assist in establishing stronger connections for those parts of our community. Kim committed to keep me updated as the project continues to be designed and constructed.

### **APRIL 12, 19, 26, 2021 EASTERN ONTARIO HEALTH UNIT**

Throughout April, I also participated on separate weekly briefings provided on Mondays by the Eastern Ontario Health Unit (EOHU) to receive updates from Dr. Paul Roumeliotis, the Medical Officer of Health and the Chief Executive Officer for the Eastern Ontario Health Unit. The audience for these Monday briefings consists of representatives from local media outlets. Throughout the month, Dr. Paul provided updates on the current case numbers and trends leading to additional restrictions including the implementation of the

province wide stay-at-home order. Dr. Paul also described the progress being made on the vaccine rollouts and the issues with vaccine supply being faced by Canada, the province, and the EOHU.

### **APRIL 13, 2021 NATION BUILDING NEGOTIATIONS**

On the afternoon of April 13, 2021, I participated in an afternoon session of the Canada–Akwesasne self government negotiations. The afternoon session was designed to receive an update from Finance Canada on the taxation language being proposed by Akwesasne. On the call of April 13, 2021, it was reported by the Finance Canada representative that her department was not in a position to respond to Akwesasne and that no update was available. The negotiating team expressed our disappointment with the lack of response.

### **APRIL 14, 2021 CALL WITH HUMAN RESOURCES AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT CANADA REGARDING FIRST NATION AND INUIT CHILD CARE**

On April 14, 2021 I spoke with representatives from Human Resource and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) regarding funding for child care. Earlier in March I had spoken with the same representatives to discuss the childcare program and had requested that they examine the possibility of having the program funding transferred through our 10-year grant. On the call of April 14, 2021 the representatives explained that they were still examining options for the 10-year grant but needed to continue to work with Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) for the funding transfer. I committed to follow up with both ISC and HRSDC in the near future to receive another update on the funding.

### **APRIL 16, 2021 BI-WEEKLY MEETING WITH SAINT REGIS MOHAWK TRIBE**

Our Council has been meeting with the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe (SRMT) on a bi-weekly basis as part of our ongoing commitment to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of these meetings is to provide an opportunity for Council and our Emergency Operations Center to share information on MCA's pandemic response with our

counterparts from the SRMT. Topics for these weekly discussions include updates on current positive cases of COVID-19, potential changes to community directives, updates from the weekly border calls, and other COVID-19 related discussions.

### **APRIL 19, 2021 COUNCIL MEETING UPDATE**

- The Director of the Department of Community and Social Services (DCSS ) and the Program Manager of the Community Support Program (CSP) presented on the draft funeral assistance policy. Council gave feedback on the draft and revisions will be made.
- Council determined that the 2021/22 MCA budget will be the only agenda item for the April 2021 General Meeting.
- Notice was provided that a briefing note on common assault provisions for the draft Canada–Akwesasne self government agreement is forthcoming for Council’s discussion.
- An update was provided on the protocols and provisions being implemented for the upcoming General Election, to ensure that COVID-19 health directives are adhered to.
- Council discussed a request for plants/seeds to be provided for the garden boxes. Portfolio Chiefs will follow-up to determine options.
- A concern regarding a request for high school students to consider being vaccinated was discussed. Follow-up will take place and will be reported back.
- Council discussed potential options for a Mohawk word to be used on the CBSA domestic lane. The domestic lane committee will follow up, taking into consideration the character limitations of the sign.
- An update was provided on the CBSA reporting relief pilot project for Council’s update.
- Council discussed a donation request from the Akwesasne Boys & Girls Club and referred it to administration.



- A briefing was provided on a situation regarding the need for additional assistance for funeral costs; follow up will be done on options.
- A request for OVS to consider sending annual letters to cottagers was made and will be followed up by Portfolio Chiefs.
- Council discussed the current Bank of Montreal on reserve mortgage program and agreed that a homeowner workshop should be considered for approved applicants.
- A request for additional stop signs in Kana:takon was discussed and will be followed up on by administration.
- Administration provided an update that further organizational changes will be paused for the time being.
- MCRs passed: Approval of 2021 Appraisal of 13 Islands; Approval of 2021 Appraisal for Numerous Navigation Sites, Communication Sites, and Industrial Site; Approval of 2021 Appraisal of Hamilton Island; Approval of 2019 Annual Reconciliation Report for Ministry of Health and Long Term Care-Tsiionkwanonhso:te Program and Authorization to Issue Audits; Approval to Submit the Nutfield Tract Specific Claim; Approval of Access to Territory Request for Mohawk Island Vacations; Approval of Five (5) Council Meeting Minutes; Approval of Three (3) Emergency Council Meeting Minutes.

## **APRIL 19, 2021 CALL WITH MINISTRY OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL**

On the morning of April 19, 2021 I spoke with the Associate Deputy Attorney General Kimberly Murray regarding Akwesasne's proposed compliance program. Back in March 2021, we hosted a call with Attorney General of Canada/Minister of Justice David Lametti regarding our compliance program proposal and on the call of April 19, 2021 with Kimberly Murray we discussed options for presenting our proposal. Kimberly suggested that a letter be sent to the Ontario Solicitor General about our proposal and she agreed to assist with securing the meeting with the Solicitor General.

## **APRIL 19, 2021 ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS INFORMATION SESSION ON CANADIAN FEDERAL BUDGET**

On the evening of April 19, 2021, I participated on a call with the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) to receive information on the recently announced 2021 Federal Budget. Representatives of the AFN provided a high level analysis of the actual budget document. It was reported that the proposed budget invested more than \$18 billion over five years into First Nation communities. The budget proposed additional investment to combat COVID-19, money to support mental health, combat racism, infrastructure investments, child welfare investments, and a number of other areas. It was further explained that the budget was only being proposed at this stage and would still require the approval of the House of Commons. It was noted that this budget announcement included the largest investment into First Nation communities in a number of years. We will continue to support the acceptance and implementation of budget 2021.

## **APRIL 20, 2021 CALL WITH HYDRO ONE**

Earlier in the month of April 2021 I received notification from Hydro One of an upcoming construction project within the City of Cornwall. On April 20, 2021 I spoke with Sara Jane Souliere from Hydro One Indigenous Relations to receive more information on the project. Sara explained that Hydro One applied for a permit to retrofit their St. Lawrence Transfer Station, which included the replacement of a number of transformers at the station. It's expected that the project will take 3 years. I expressed to Sara our desire to assist in any way with the supply of contractors in order to secure jobs for Akwesasne members on the project. I committed to Sara to follow up with a list of local contractors for Hydro One's consideration.

## **APRIL 20, 2021 CKON UPDATE TO THE COMMUNITY**

On April 20, 2021 I provided the community with an update on CKON 97.3 Radio. Since April 6, 2020, I have been providing regular updates on the radio to the community. The update on April 20 focused on our COVID-19 vaccine rollout and current restrictions in Akwesasne and the surrounding areas. Following my update and presentation I took



questions from the community regarding a variety of subjects. The entire update can be found at: [https://youtu.be/7CGvE\\_P2d8w](https://youtu.be/7CGvE_P2d8w)

### **APRIL 21, 2021 INTERVIEW WITH CBC**

On the morning of April 21, 2021 I provided Kanhehsii Deer of CBC an interview on the ongoing Hopkins Point occupancy. Kanhehsii explained that she interviewed the Akwesasne member who was building a language camp at Hopkins Point and we further discussed the current occupancy. I explained that the Akwesasne member is building a camp on property owned not only by the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, but this camp is also being built on two other pieces of property that are privately owned by non-Akwesasne members. I noted that we were concerned about the possible repercussions to the Akwesasne member for building on privately owned property and further explained that I have been in constant contact with the Mayor of Dundee regarding the situation. The entire news article can be found at: <https://newsinteractives.cbc.ca/longform/reclaiming-land-language>

### **APRIL 22, 2021 PRESENTATION TO CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD OF EASTERN ONTARIO**

Earlier in 2021 I had been contacted by the Indigenous Education Lead for the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario (CDSBEO) who requested that I provide a presentation to the executives of the board. On April 22, 2021 I provided the executives with an overview of our community and discussed the impacts the border has had on our community and the rights we carry as Mohawks of Akwesasne. I explained the current differences between Canada and the United States in relation to the Jay Treaty, and the impacts each country's approaches have had on Akwesasne. I also discussed the current proposed legislation in Canada to recognise the United Nations Declaration on the Right of Indigenous Peoples. Following my formal presentation I answered a number of questions and thanked the executives for the opportunity to present to them.

### **APRIL 22, 2021 CORNWALL HARBOUR CO-OWNERS MEETING**

Following my presentation to the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario (CDSBEO), I participated at the Cornwall Harbour Co-Owners meeting. The project manager Cornwall and the Counties Future Development Corporation (CFDC) provided the co-owners with an update on the current community consultation plan and the efforts being made to launch the consultation plan. The co-owners received an update on the current status of leases on the property, the current logo contest, and the upcoming media campaigns to get people involved in the consultation. An update was also provided on the tendering of the demolition of the warehouse on the property.

### **APRIL 22, 2021 CORNWALL COMMUNITY HOSPITAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

On the evening of April 22, 2021 I participated in the regularly scheduled Cornwall Community Hospital Board of Directors meeting. The board received a presentation from the Human Resource Officer on the hospital's current efforts to recruit staff to the hospital. It was explained that many health care institutes were struggling with recruitment because of the pandemic. An overview was also provided on the hospital's initiatives to support staff and prevent staff burnout. An update was provided on the hospital's application to the Ontario Health Team to support program expansion at the hospital. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO), the Chief of Staff, and the President of the medical staff each provided the board with their monthly reports. The patient safety quarterly report was also highlighted to the board. The board then conducted its standard in camera session. The next board meeting is scheduled for June 3, 2021.

### **APRIL 25, 2021 INTERVIEW WITH STANDARD FREEHOLDER**

On April 25, 2021 I provided an interview to the Cornwall Standard Freeholder regarding the Additions to Reserve (ATR) process underway for the return of four islands to Akwesasne from the Ontario Power Generation (OPG). I explained that the process has been underway for several years and is unfortunately expected to take several more years to complete. I further explained that the

Government of Canada's ATR process is very lengthy and requires notification to the local municipality at its commencement. I also noted that the islands being returned to Akwesasne were part of the community prior to the seaway and dam construction project. The entire article can be found at: <https://www.standard-freeholder.com/news/local-news/negotiations-to-return-st-lawrence-river-islands-to-akwesasne-to-begin-in-earnest>

### **APRIL 26, 2021 COUNCIL MEETING UPDATE**

- Council discussed a briefing note on common assault from the Nation Building program and determined that a decision will be deferred until the Justice Portfolio has had an opportunity to review and discuss this topic at their multi-jurisdictional table.
- A briefing was provided on the proposed CBSA reporting relief project. A separate meeting will be set up for Council to fully review the proposed reporting protocol for the pilot project.
- Council discussed a request from the Iroquois Caucus to support a request for an extension to the Federal Indian Day School Class Action Settlement deadline for applications. Council agreed that a letter will be sent to request the extension.
- A complaint from a community member regarding their rent to own arrangement was brought forward. The complaint will be forwarded to the Executive Director for follow up.
- Council was provided a briefing on the implementation of the Akwesasne Financial Administration Law.
- MCRs passed: Approval of contract with Traditional Medicine Healer; Approval of contract with Traditional Medicine Man; Approval of Quebec Road Subsidy Expense Report; Approval of agreement with Akwesasne Community Settlement Trust for distribution of funds awarded by the Trust; Approval of amendment to Ontario funding agreement for COVID-19 surge; Approval of placement of two sets of 4-way stop signs in Kanatakon.

## **APRIL 26, 2021 PRE-MEETING TO MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL MEETING REGARDING ROADS**

On the afternoon of April 26, 2021 I met with representatives of the Department of Infrastructure, Housing, and the Environment (DIHE) to prepare for an upcoming meeting with Canada, Ontario, and Quebec to discuss funding for Akwesasne roads. We discussed the current road project priorities in Akwesasne and reviewed the presentation that was prepared for the upcoming meeting with the various governments.

## **APRIL 27, 2021 ST. LAWRENCE COLLEGE BOARD OF GOVERNORS MEETING**

On April 27, 2021 I participated at the regular St. Lawrence College (SLC) Board of Governors meeting. The monthly meeting began with a report from the President & CEO of the college, followed by reports from each board committee. The committees recommended a number of motions for the board's consideration based on the reports, including a motion to accept the 2021/22 annual operating budget. A report was provided on the recommendations for awarding of SLC honorary degrees to individuals who demonstrated outstanding commitment to their communities. The board then went into a closed session to receive in-camera updates.

## **APRIL 28, 2021 MEETING WITH CORNWALL RCMP**

On the morning of April 28, 2021 I met with the new Cornwall RCMP Detachment Commander Jamie McGowan. Jamie recently became the new commander of the Cornwall detachment and had reached out to introduce himself. I explained previous situations we've encountered where the RCMP have entered into our territory without prior notification and noted to Jamie that these types of situations cause anxiety within the community. I reminded Jamie that the Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service is a well equipped police force and are responsible for policing in our community and that my expectation is that the RCMP to respects this. Jamie thanked me for the meeting and committed to meeting regularly.

### **APRIL 28, 2021 INTERVIEW WITH PERCH MAGAZINE**

On the afternoon of April 28, 2021 I provided Chantel Tranchemontahé of Perch Magazine with an interview regarding the Cornwall Harbour project. I explained to Chantel that the Cornwall and the Communities Future Development Corporation (CFDC) will be doing community consultation on behalf of the co-owners. I informed Chantel of the reasons why the MCA and Cornwall became co-owners and explained that the Federal Government provided an ultimatum that the two parties would have to be partners or the government would divest the property under the existing divestiture policy. Chantel will be publishing the article in an upcoming Perch Magazine.

### **APRIL 28, 2021 LEADERSHIP MEETING**

On the afternoon April 28, 2021 members of our Council met with representatives of the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Council (SRMT) and the Mohawk Nation Council of Chiefs (MNCC) to discuss the New York State Land Claim. Representative of the SRMT provided an update on the ongoing negotiations to settle the claim. The parties discussed the history of the claim and the changes that have occurred over the years since the claim was first filed. The magistrate overseeing the case recently ordered the court case to proceed. The parties discussed legal strategies and agreed that the negotiations would continue with an MCA observer present.

### **APRIL 29, 2021 PRESENTATIONS BY POTENTIAL INVESTMENT MANAGERS**

On the morning of April 29, 2021 I participated in the interviews of two companies, CIBC and PH&N, who were being considered as potential account managers for the Dundee settlement proceeds. With the assistance of our independent consultant, the search for an investment manager had been narrowed to these two firms. On April 29, 2021 CIBC and PH&N each provided a presentation to our Executive Director, a member of our Finance Committee, and I. The presentation included information on who the companies were and the services offered by these firms to best manage proceeds on behalf

of our community. Following the presentations, MCA's interview committee will meet to further discuss their recommendation to Council.

### **APRIL 29, 2021 GENERAL MEETING**

On the evening of April 29, 2021 our Council hosted the General Meeting utilizing the Zoom platform. The only agenda item for this meeting was the 2021-2022 MCA Operating Plan & Budget. The entire recording of the April General Meeting can be found at: <https://youtu.be/iJn9vYrlAv0> . The next General Meeting will occur at the end of May on the Zoom platform. Questions for Council can be e-mailed in advance to [meetings@akwesasne](mailto:meetings@akwesasne) to ensure they are answered at the meeting.

### **APRIL 30, 2021 MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL MEETING REGARDING ROADS**

On the morning of April 30, 2021 members of the Department of Infrastructure, Housing, and the Environment (DIHE), DIHE Portfolio Chiefs, and I met with representatives of Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), Ontario Indigenous Affairs, Ontario Ministry of Transport, and Quebec Ministry of Transport. The purpose of this meeting was to present Akwesasne's infrastructure needs in relation to roads. A presentation was provided to the participants that outlined the 47 kilometers of roads in Akwesasne, the current condition of our roads, and our top four priority road projects which are Wade Lafrance, Park Street, River Road East, and Harbour Road. These projects were identified as the most pressing in our community. Following the presentation we received presentations from ISC, Ontario, and Quebec on the current funding sources for roads in First Nation communities. We discussed the possibility of securing a 5 year commitment from each of these governments to support Akwesasne roads. During the meeting, ISC committed \$2 million dollars and called on the provinces to provide support. Following this meeting, we will continue to follow up with ISC and the provinces on securing sustainable funding for Akwesasne road projects.