

# MOHAWK COUNCIL OF AKWESASNE

*Tetewaie:na - Honoring the past, facing today's challenges, building a strong future.*



## OFFICE OF THE GRAND CHIEF

Tsiothohrkó:wa/January 29, 2016

Watkwanonhwera:ton/Greetings,

Happy New Year to all of you! This is my first official report since 2015 and I hope everyone has managed to keep warm throughout the cold month of January.

Our monthly General Meeting was held in the district of Tsi Snaihne last night, but I was unfortunately unable to attend due to a pre-scheduled vacation outside the community. I'm confident that our Council did an awesome job presenting at the meeting and responding to community questions, and a big Niawenko:wa goes out to the two Tsi Snaihne Chiefs who co-chaired the meeting.

Last evening my December 2015 report was shared with the community. I'm attaching a copy of that report for you. As always I hope you take a moment to read this report in order to receive a quick update on some of the ongoing work your leadership is involved in. I have done my best to capture most of the meetings and events/functions I have been involved with throughout the month of December.

Council has adopted a new protocol with respect to cancellations/postponements of General Meetings should a death occur in the community. The new protocol is based on community feedback collected at the past three General Meetings and what has been decided is that if a death occurs in the district that the General Meeting is scheduled to take place, the General Meeting will continue to be held on the scheduled date and time, but the meeting will take place in another district. This new protocol was put in place for consistency.

I trust that the information provided herein and in the attached report is both useful and informative. I strive to keep the community updated using as many means possible in order to reach as many of you as I can. You can follow me on Facebook by liking my page "Abram Benedict", where you will have access to my regularly posted updates.

I hope you enjoy the month ahead and encourage you to attend the next General Meeting, which is taking place at the end of February.

Nia:wen & All my best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Abram Benedict", is written over a white background.

Abram Benedict  
Grand Chief



## Grand Chief Abram Benedict's December 2015 Activity Report

### DECEMBER 1, 2015 COUNCIL MEETING

- Representatives from US Customs and Border Protection Massena introduced themselves to Council and spoke about operations at the Massena port and offered to work with Council on presenting border crossing requirements to new drivers in Akwesasne via the high schools.
- Council set the General Meeting agenda for December 3, 2015—to be released shortly.
- A letter of request for support from the Akwesasne Cultural Centre was discussed; further research will be done before considering the request.
- Council confirmed attendees for the upcoming Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Chiefs Assembly being held next week in Ottawa.
- A request for technical assistance from the Akwesasne Carnival Committee was reviewed and sent to MCA communications for follow up.
- A brief was provided on an incident with US Customs and will be followed up on with the morning presenters.
- MCRs passed: Approval of budget for Block 1 lands clean up on Kawehno:ke; Approval of weight restriction on Hamilton Island Bridge; Acceptance of award of fuel tender for MCA facilities; Approval of 3 years lease with G & L for building; Confirmation of signing authority for Akwesasne/Canada agreements; Approval of permit with DFO for navigation light on Thompson Island; Approval of (7) upgrade loan(s) to community member(s); Approval of (4) sets of Council Meeting Minutes.

## DECEMBER 4, 2015 THRONE SPEECH

His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada, delivered the Speech from the Throne to open the 42<sup>nd</sup> session of Parliament and outlined the Government's agenda. Chief Ryan Jacobs and I



were able to attend the parliament and witness the Throne Speech. During the speech the government committed to nation to nation relationships with Indigenous people; implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations; launching an inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous woman and girls; and to work with First Nations to ensure Frist Nations have access to quality education. Following the speech, Chief Jacobs and I were able to meet and speak briefly about our community to former Prime Minister Joe Clark; Speaker of the Senate George Furey; and the Governor General of Canada, Right Honourable David Johnston.



### **DECEMBER 7, 2015 IROQUOIS CAUCUS MEETING**

A number of Chiefs and I attended an all-day Iroquois Caucus (IC) meeting held in Gatineau, Quebec. The agenda included a presentation by James O'Reilly & Associates, lawyers for a tobacco manufacturing business based out of Kahnawake who are challenging the government over rights to be able to move tobacco products from one community to another. The Chiefs of the IC discussed ways to bring various other individuals and communities together who are involved in similar legal challenges to discuss a strategy on the tobacco issues. The Algonquins of Ontario provided a presentation of the current status of the comprehensive land claim negotiations that are ongoing with Canada and the province of Ontario and the IC leadership had a lengthy discussion with the Algonquins about overlapping claim areas. The National Chief for the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) provided a report on his trip to the Paris Climate Change Conference (COP21) and he talked about how important it is to make reference to Indigenous Peoples within the language of the final agreement at the COP21.

### **DECEMBER 7, 2015 POLITICAL CONFEDERACY FOR THE CHIEFS OF ONTARIO MEETING**

On the evening of December 7, the Political Confederacy (PC) for the Chiefs on Ontario (COO) met to hear a debriefing from the Ontario Regional Chief on a recent AFN Executive Committee meeting. The Ontario Region had recently proposed a protocol between the AFN and COO which would outline how the AFN and Ontario Chiefs would communicate and be held accountable. The AFN Executive asked for amendment to the protocol before it would be considered, the PC agreed to the amendments and asked that the protocol be signed in the coming days. The Regional Chief also briefed the PC on a dispute that may come to the AFN assembly in the form of a resolution in the coming days.

The Minister of Indigenous Affairs and Northern Development Carolyn Bennett and the Minister of Justice Jody Wilson-Raybould attended the Ontario Caucus and talked about priorities of the Government over the next four years which include an inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous Woman and Girls. The Minister of Indigenous Affairs held sidebar meetings

with various Chiefs while the Minister of Justice fielded questions from the larger group of Ontario Chiefs.

Between the Iroquois Caucus and the Chiefs of Ontario meeting I met with Six Nations Chief Ava Hill and Chief Byron Louis from the Okanagan Band regarding the Federal government's policy on large land claims. We discussed commonalities and agreed to meet again in February at an upcoming AFN assembly on energy.

### **DECEMBER 8, 2015 ONTARIO CAUCUS MEETING**

The agenda items for this meeting included the proposed AFN protocol and the proposed amendment to the draft. The Regional Chief briefed the Chiefs on the challenges he has been having with the AFN and the real need to have the protocol signed.

### **DECEMBER 8-10, 2015 ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS SPECIAL CHIEFS ASSEMBLY**

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Special Chiefs Assembly (SCA) started with an opening prayer from Elder Elmer Courchene and opening words from Chief Jean-Guy Whiteduck from Kitigan Zibi who hosted the event on their traditional territory. Following the opening, the National Chief provided brief opening remarks and introduced the Prime Minister of Canada to the Assembly.

The Prime Minister informed the Chiefs that his government would launch a national public inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous woman and girls; make significant investment in First Nations education; lift the two per cent cap on funding for First Nations programs; fully implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations; and the government would conduct a review of legislation imposed by the Harper government to ensure it's consistent with First Nations rights and to repeal laws where necessary. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is the First Prime Minister to attend the AFN assembly in over 20 years; the last to attend was Prime Minister Trudeau, Senior.



Following the Prime Ministers address, the AFN held a special honouring ceremony to recognize the Chief Commissioner and Commission members of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for the residential school survivors.

Over the course of the three days of the AFN SCA the following topics were discussed and/or updates were provided:

- National Chief discussed working with the new Federal Government to advance priorities;
- Implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation recommendations, which included presentation by the commissioners;
- Update on Health, Housing and Infrastructure and Water, Child Welfare, and Education
- Presentation and update from the First Nations Child and Family caring society on the human rights complaint they filed against the Government of Canada. A decision on the complaint is expect in January 2016;
- Presentation from Chief Commissioner of the Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC) on priorities of the Chief Commissioner on reform to the CHRC;
- Update on Day Scholars class action suit against Canada;
- Presentation on Murdered and Missing Indigenous Woman and Girls;
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Commissioner spoke about the work he is doing within the RCMP to bridge relationships with First Nation Communities;

- Representation from Ahkwesahsne Mohawk Board of Education (AMBE) on Akwesasne's school system and how the Skawatsira program here in Akwesasne works to restore our Mohawk language;
- Minister of Oceans and Fisheries spoke about priorities of his department

The Minister of Indigenous Affairs Carolyn Bennett and Minister Wilson-Raybould attended the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador (AFNQL) to hear about Quebec region priorities and take questions from the Chfs.

On the last day of the Assembly, the Minister of Indigenous Affairs Carolyn Bennett gave a wrap up presentation from the three days prior on what she has heard as priorities of the Chiefs and the challenges each community faces. Minister Bennett, Minister Wilson-Raybould, and Minister Tootoo were present for most of the three days of the Assembly to hear priorities and to meet with regions.

#### **DECEMBER 9, 2015 LIBERAL CAUCUS HOLIDAY PARTY**



Chief Karen Loran, Chief Connie Lazore, and I attended the Liberal Caucus Holiday Party at the Shaw Centre. Mr. & Mrs. Justin Trudeau greeted the 2700 guests to the function. The National Chiefs office had invited to me to sit with the AFN delegation. Prior to the meal being served there was a bit of a reception where I was able to speak briefly with the Minister of

Public Safety. I was also able to introduce myself and speak briefly with the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development Honourable Havdeep Bains; Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Honourable John McCallum; and the President of the Treasury Board of Canada.

### **DECEMBER 11, 2015 AKWESASNE HOLIDAY HELPERS**

The Mohawk Council of Akwesasne (MCA) and a small group of employees had historically contributed to the Akwesasne Mountain of Toys drive. This year on December 11, 2016, I presented the Akwesasne Holiday Helpers (formerly the Mountain of Toys) with a cheque for over \$5,000 dollars with \$2,500 of that amount having been contributed by employees of the MCA.

### **DECEMBER 14, 2015 MEETING WITH MAYOR OF CORNWALL**

In preparation for a Monday, December 14 afternoon meeting with the Federal Bridge Corporation Limited (FBCL), I met with the Mayor of Cornwall and the CEO of Cornwall for lunch. I spoke to the Mayor about working closer together with the City in various areas including the ongoing negotiations for the Cornwall Port Divestiture. We also spoke about the North Channel bridge replacement, the water piers from the old bridge, and about recent toll changes implemented by the Seaway International Bridge Corporation (SIBC).

### **DECEMBER 14, 2015 FEDERAL BRIDGE CORPORATION LIMITED MEETING**



In the afternoon of December 14, 2015 Chief Vince Thompson, the Mayor of Cornwall, the CEO of Cornwall, and I met with Micheline Dube—President and CEO, Nathalie Kincloch, and Glen Hewus, of the Federal Bridge Corporation Ltd. (FBCL) to discuss relationship building between the

FBCL, Akwesasne, and the City of Cornwall. I reiterated to Micheline Dube that we need to work closer together and how important it is to build upon the positives. We also spoke about the proposed corridor north shore development and the new changes at the Seaway International Bridge Corporation (SIBC) around the tolling policy for taxis on transit at the toll plaza. Micheline Dube committed to following up on the issues raised and also asked for the MCA to meet with SIBC representatives.



## **DECEMBER 15, 2015 COUNCIL MEETING**

- Representative from Hydro Quebec introduced themselves to Council and spoke about the phasing in of the next generation meters. Council will determine next steps for community information session.
- Staff from Tehotiiennawakon provided Council with an update on the Comprehensive Community Plan and also provided some preliminary findings.
- An update was provided on a proposed Youth symposium being held in Akwesasne and an update on the National Indian Brotherhood trust application process was provided.
- Council agreed to allow for an additional week to receive Heating Assistance applications.
- A recent letter received from the APA president was discussed.
- Council passed a motion to rescind the last three MCRs passed for appointments to the Akwesasne Mohawk Police Commission; Motion passed placing a moratorium on proposed management structure changes within AMPS.
- Previous donations to the Akwesasne Boys & Girls Club were discussed, more research will be done.
- MCRs passed: Approval of 2009-2011 AEDF Final report; Approval of permit with Department of Fisheries and Oceans for navigation device; Approval and acceptance of Narrative Report for Champlain LHIN; Approval for MCA to assist community business with banking issues; Approval of 2012/13 audit for the Akwesasne Economic Development Fund (AEDF); Approval of 2013/14 audit for the AEDF fund; Acceptance of 10 sets of Council Meeting minutes.

## **DECEMBER 15, 2015 MEETING WITH VALLEYFIELD FAMILY COURT REPRESENTATIVES**

After the Council meeting on December 15, 2015, I was able to join the Department of Community and Social Services (DCSS) at a luncheon with the family court judges and lawyers from Valleyfield. The department of DCSS along with Akwesasne Child and Family Services (ACFS) arranged for a morning long tour of the territory and a luncheon to give the representatives of Quebec a firsthand look at the jurisdictional challenges in

Akwesasne. I was able to share a few words with the representatives and talk about working closer together to enhance the services provided, on the principal of reconciliation.



### **DECEMBER 21, 2015 LEADERSHIP MEETING**

The Mohawk Council of Akwesasne (MCA), the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe (SRMT) and the Mohawk Nation Council of Chiefs (MNCC) generally try to meet monthly to discuss various issues. At the December 21, 2015 meeting the following topics were discussed:

- Update on the NYS Land Claim from recent meetings with the County and the State
- Border ID update from the MNCC; and consideration of CBSA relocation to Rooseveltown, NY

### **DECEMBER 22, 2015 COUNCIL MEETING**

- Representatives from the Justice Department, Mohawk Court, and Tehotiiennawakon provided an update to Council on: the proposed Legislative Commission; Legislative Enactment Regulations; General Referendum Regulations; Akwesasne Court Law; Residency update around the Couples Property Law; and the Akwesasne Tobacco Products Law.
- The Aboriginal Rights and Research Office (ARRO) Manager provided Council with an update on the NYS Land Claim.

- Council reviewed the format of Council meetings with respect to 'presentations' and 'resolutions' and agreed that presentations and resolutions will be discussed at separate meetings, with only one category or the other being the agenda focus on alternating weeks.
- Council discussed the strategic plan to ensure it aligned with Council politically and that Council was aligned with the plan.
- Three Chiefs were identified to participate on the Property Acquisition Team (PAT).
- Council reviewed a request from Statistics Canada regarding Census 2016; a request for presentation will be made.
- MCRs passed: Acceptance of revisions to the Akwesasne Law Enactment Procedural Regulations; Acceptance of Akwesasne Legislative Commission Charter and Regulations; Acceptance of General Referendum Regulations; Acceptance in Principle of the Akwesasne Court Law; Approval to release draft Akwesasne Tobacco Law to Ontario for review; Approval of Cairn Island MOU with Parks Canada; Approval of AEDF 2012/13 Part III Final Report; Approval of AEDF 2013/14 Final Report; Rescindment of Akwesasne Mohawk Police Commission Appointment resolutions; Acceptance of Youth Council Terms of Reference; Approval of (2) Mortgage Guarantees with the Bank of Montreal; Approval of 4 sets of Council Meeting Minutes; Approval of contract with consultant to develop tobacco regulations for the Akwesasne Tobacco Law.

## **DECEMBER 22, 2015 MEETING WITH AKWESASNE MOHAWK POLICE COMMISSION**

A number of Council Chiefs met with members of the Akwesasne Mohawk Police Commission (AMPC) to discuss a letter that was recently publicized in the *Indian Times* regarding the Akwesasne Mohawk Police Service (AMPS). The meeting provided Council and the AMPC the opportunity to discuss common concerns and potential solutions.