

**For Immediate Release:** Jan. 24, 2022

Waterloo, NY

**Contact:** Dylan Seneca; 315-283-2693; dylanjo  
hn0125@gmail.com

## **Cayuga Nation Council of Chiefs and Community Call Out Feds for Violating Sovereignty, Empowering Tyrant**

Cayuga Nation Chief Sam George urged action from the Biden administration, addressing a crowd gathered for a press conference on Sunday. “This administration must not stand back and allow Halftown’s terrorist acts to continue to torment the Cayuga citizens,” he said, while delivering a statement from the Cayuga Nation Council of Chiefs.

The Council’s statement comes in the wake of the most recent overnight action taken by Clint Halftown, who is currently recognized by the U.S. Department of Interior as the “federal representative” of the Cayuga Nation. On January 1st, Halftown’s employees raided and shuttered Pipekeepers Tobacco & Gas, a business operated by and employing Cayuga Nation citizens.

According to Sachem Sam George and Dylan Seneca, who read a statement on behalf of the traditional Gayogohó:nq’ (Cayuga Nation) community in Seneca Falls, this event is the latest in a long series of Halftown’s actions that oppress the Nation’s traditional governance and community. This includes the February 22, 2020 overnight demolition of a Gayogohó:nq’ community garden, along with a schoolhouse used for learning language and longhouse ways.

“These are human rights violations. These are the actions of a domestic tyrant. Our people deserve better,” said Sachem Sam George. In the words of the community’s statement, “Halftown always paints us traditional Gayogohó:nq’ people as disobedient dissidents, but we are really just trying to live according to our custom and tradition.”

The core issue, according to the Council of Chiefs’ statement, is that “The Department of the Interior has interfered with our sovereignty time and again.” Specifically, the Department continues to recognize Halftown as a representative of the Cayuga Nation. However, Seneca described how Halftown had been removed from his representative role through the processes of the Great Law of Peace (the constitution of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, of which Cayuga is one of six nations).

The Council of Chiefs renewed their request for a meeting with President Biden, citing Article VII of the 1794 Treaty of Canandaigua, which details how the Council of Chiefs and the President communicate grievances to one another. Despite requesting months ago for a meeting with officials from the BIA, as well as for the federal government to withdraw its recognition of Halftown, “So far, we have not heard anything back from them,” said Sachem Sam George.

[more]

One press conference audience member asked what next steps non-Cayuga individuals might take to address the situation. “A lot of us are figuring out that, ‘What can we do?’ question,” said Maddie Halpert, a non-Cayuga community organizer who attended the press conference. “Obviously, the Council of Chiefs and Cayuga citizens are working on this, but as someone who was born and grew up on Cayuga land... how can we get our government to listen up, and say ‘stop violating sovereignty in our names’?”

Recently, grassroots efforts pushing for local governments to address the BIA on this issue succeeded in Seneca County and the Town of Enfield. “We’re trying to pass a resolution now in my hometown, to tell the folks in D.C. their offices have gotten it wrong,” Halpert said. “The people in those offices now have basically inherited this mistake, but for all our sakes, they can leave this nation-to-nation relationship better than they found it.”

###