



HAUDENOSAUNEE

MOHAWK - ONEIDA - ONONDAGA - CAYUGA - SENECA - TUSCARORA

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HAUDENOSAUNEE GRAND COUNCIL REITERATES POSITION ON ELECTED COUNCILS

For Immediate Release
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Greetings from the Chiefs, Clanmothers, Faithkeepers, and people of the Haudenosaunee Six Nations Confederacy – People of the Longhouse.

The Grand Council of Chiefs would like to take this time to remind its citizens of the Haudenosaunee position on imposed elected Band and Tribal councils and our proposed remedy to standardize governance within the domain of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

From the moment elected councils were imposed in our communities, its primary intent was to abolish the strength and national character of our traditional governments and to assist in the enfranchisement and assimilation of the Haudenosaunee into the national fabric of both Canada and the United States. It has since been the position of the Haudenosaunee that elected councils imposed by either Canada or the United States, exist outside the Circle Wampum. No one person or nation can bring into the Circle another form of governance without the full expressed acceptance of the Grand Council

The Circle Wampum makes the line between traditional councils and elected councils clear and distinct; the traditional councils are the original governments of the Haudenosaunee communities/nations handling national affairs, while the elected councils are imposed systems of the Indian Act in Canada and Federal Indian Law in the United States for the administration of colonial policies in each community. Within recent years however, these elected councils have begun commandeering the distinct symbols, philosophies, and national character of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy – thus misrepresenting themselves to external agencies and the limiting the significance of the Haudenosaunee as an original Indigenous system of governance.

Whether it is reference to the Two Row Wampum, treaties, nation-to-nation relationships, or the subtle implication that these elected councils are somehow synonymous with the Haudenosaunee Confederacy or the Traditional Councils; this ambiguity has now perpetuated a false impression and confusion both externally and internally that elected councils are actually a part of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

Most recently, these elected councils have endeavoured into the international arena, a domain populated by nations and states, through a formal entity called the Iroquois Caucus, National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), and The United Southern and Eastern Tribes (USET). Since 1977, the Haudenosaunee have pioneered the indigenous presence at the United Nations and other international venues, leading towards the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; a presence the Iroquois Caucus, NCAI, and USET endeavours to supplant by perpetuating itself as the legitimate voice of our communities internationally and will act in the interest of their colonial masters Canada and the United States.

The Grand Council of Chiefs feels that it can no longer remain acquiescent on this matter and must insist that the appropriation of the Haudenosaunee national character cease. Furthermore, the Grand Council of Chiefs must relay to its neighbours that the Iroquois Caucus and its tributary elected councils, along with both the NCAI and USET, do not represent the Haudenosaunee or its member nations. While the Grand Council of Chiefs feels that it must be firm on this matter, our council reminds elected councils of the Haudenosaunee remedy to standardize governance in our communities under the Kaianere'kó:wa (Great Law of Peace).

In 1991, the Haudenosaunee Chiefs outlined its prerequisites to begin meaningful dialogue on how we can all live by the principles and laws of the Kaianere'kó:wa, within the Longhouse of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. At that time, Haudenosaunee Chiefs asked the elected councils to respect and recognize its authority over eight political areas it historically claims jurisdiction over. While we understand that at this time Canada and the United States only recognize the legitimacy of elected councils, we feel this will never change so long as our own people wilfully accept this colonial imposition. The Grand Council of Chiefs remains steadfast to this necessary show of good faith and is prepared to begin the necessary work to help decolonize the political structures in each of our communities.

This issue is challenging in many ways because of the personal impact this has on individuals who have a heartfelt connection to the Haudenosaunee and wish to express it in ways that they think is helpful. What is not realized is that by representing the Haudenosaunee within colonial constructs it furthers the colonial agenda of Canada and United States. The elective systems are foreign entities that are colonizing the culture by misappropriation. Placing our teachings, laws, and symbols within the colonial construct of the elective band council system is morphing decolonization into a meaningless apparition of cultural revitalization and transformation.

The Kaianere'kó:wa is based upon inclusivity, peaceful coexistence, and strength through unity – bound by laws that ensure a democratic and consensual decision-making process. The Grand Council of Chiefs makes no judgments of the moral character or sincerity of those individuals who currently serve as elected councillors, but we do encourage them to bring their gifts, skills, and dedication back into the canoe and take shelter beneath the Great Tree of Peace. Bound together by the good tidings of peace and power, we can be stronger than ever.

Da•ne'thoh,

Tadodaho Sidney Hill
Chief Sidney Hill, Tadodaho