

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TAKE ACTION SUPPORTING CAYUGA NATION  
SELF-DETERMINATION WHILE CHIEF, FINGER LAKES RESIDENTS HEAD TO D.C.  
WITH “UMBRELLA MOSAIC” TO MARK ANNIVERSARY OF COUNCIL OF CHIEFS’  
LETTER**

INTERLAKEN, NY – Interlaken voted unanimously on May 12th to become the most recent municipality calling on President Biden and the federal government to respect the Gayogohó:nq’ (Cayuga Nation) decision to remove Clint Halftown as a representative to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (B.I.A.) and Department of Interior (D.O.I.). Interlaken’s vote comes on the heels of Ithaca Common Council’s unanimously-signed April 27 letter bringing the issue to the attention of the Secretary of Interior and other federal officials. These outcomes are part of a groundswell of local government actions around Cayuga Lake in the last several months– including Town of Enfield, Town of Dryden, and Seneca County, spurred on by the #HalftownMustGo campaign.

Interlaken’s resolution outlines the U.S. federal government’s violation of Cayuga Nation self-determination. The Haudenosaunee Confederacy, of which the Gayogohó:nq’ are one of six member nations, recognizes the Chiefs and Clan Mothers as the Gayogohó:nq’ government. By continuing to recognize Halftown, the U.S. is enabling actions that oppress traditional Gayogohó:nq’ citizens and violate their human rights. The resolution cites Halftown’s February 2020 overnight demolition of a community garden and schoolhouse “used for learning language and longhouse ways” as just one example.

Organizers from HalftownMustGo drafted the resolution through months of consultation with scholars, attorneys, and the Council of Chiefs. “The Council of Chiefs published a letter in May, 2021, calling on people of the U.S. to hold our government accountable,” said Michael Watson, an Ithaca organizer with HalftownMustGo. “Easier said than done, but people are coming out of the woodwork around the lake and getting really creative,” Watson said. In addition to passing resolutions, residents have been writing postcards, sending emails, and organizing ‘phone zaps’ to relevant D.C. officials since August 2021.

Despite nearly two decades of diplomatic efforts from the Council of Chiefs themselves, and the recent outcry from local U.S. governments and residents, the federal government has failed to respond to the Council of Chiefs on this issue. In fact, the D.O.I. is currently reviewing an application for land-into-trust submitted by Halftown’s Council.

But, organizers have more creativity in store. Marking the anniversary of the Council of Chiefs’ letter, a Chief and Gayogohó:nq’ citizens will head to D.C., alongside allies from around Cayuga Lake. On Monday, May 16th, demonstrators will be marching the letter’s text to the D.O.I. and White House on a set of painted umbrellas. When arranged in order, the umbrellas will look like The Two Row Wampum, a 409-year-old, purple and white belt that is a living treaty between the Haudenosaunee and settlers.

When asked if they're running out of ideas to get the U.S. government to address the issue, Watson said, "No way. We're enabling this mess, so all of us in the U.S. need to keep trying until our government actually listens to Indigenous nations." The trip's participants are hoping their "umbrella mosaic" will provide a watershed moment for this nation-to-nation relationship.

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*The HalftownMustGo campaign is organized by people of the U.S. living on Gayogóhó:nq' land, working in relationships of care with Gayogóhó:nq' citizens and governance. We take collective action to prompt President Biden and his administration to meet with the Council of Chiefs and heed the Gayogóhó:nq' removal of Clint Halftown. Visit [HalftownMustGo.org](https://HalftownMustGo.org).*