



CITY OF ITHACA

108 East Green Street, Ithaca, New York 14850-6590

COMMON COUNCIL
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April 27, 2022

Debra Anne Haaland, Secretary of the Interior
United States Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Darryl LaCounte, Director
Bureau of Indian Affairs
MS-4606
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Bryan Newland
U.S. Dept. of Interior Principal Deputy Assistant
Secretary – Bureau of Indian Affairs
MS-4660-MIB
1849 C Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Kimberly Bouchard
Eastern Regional Office
Bureau of Indian Affairs
545 Marriot Drive, Suite 700
Nashville, Tennessee 37214

Greetings,

This letter comes to you from the City of Ithaca, New York's Common Council. We write to you to voice our concern about the violence and intimidation that has been taking place within the Cayuga (Gayogoho:no) Nation of Indians, on lands they now own in and around Seneca Falls and Union Springs, New York. Our city lies at the southern end of Cayuga Lake, while the communities most affected by these recent conflicts lay at the northern end of Cayuga Lake. All of us reside within the aboriginal territory of the Cayuga Nation.

As you know, at about 3 a.m. on February 22, 2022, a contingent of Cayuga Nation Police under the direction of Mr. Clint Halftown and his governing Council seized and then bulldozed a collection of 12 buildings along NYS Route 89, just south of Seneca Falls. These buildings belonged to the Cayuga Nation and were occupied by a variety of businesses and cultural entities being run by Cayuga people not affiliated with Mr. Halftown or his supporters. The buildings included Lakeside Trading, a very successful gas station/convenience store, a canning plant, an ice cream stand and a miniature golf course. These businesses brought in large revenues and employed a significant number of Cayuga people. In addition, a schoolhouse that was used to teach Cayuga language and traditions, as well as a traditional garden that served similar educational purposes, were also destroyed. At least three Cayuga men who were serving as security guards to the buildings were handcuffed with zip ties and hauled away by the recently hired, non-Indian, Cayuga Nation Police.

One week later, on February 29, 2022, a rally was held at the sight to protest the Halftown Council's actions of the previous week. At the end of this rally, the Cayuga Nation's police fought with protesting Cayugas and their Haudenosuanee supporters, using mace and billy clubs against both men and women.

Since these troubling violent incidents two years ago, intimidation by the Halftown Council toward the more culturally traditional members of the Cayuga Nation, who do not recognize Mr. Halftown's leadership status, has continued. This intimidation has taken several forms. Economically, the Halftown Council has determined that some Cayuga people are no longer "members in good standing", (failure to pay rent on tribal housing being a common reason) and are therefore not entitled to various funding sources that all Cayugas are eligible for. The Nation's police force of more than a dozen members continues to be seen as bullying hired muscle, not just among Cayuga people but among non-Cayuga members of the local communities as well. The recently created Cayuga Court system, complete with its own non-native judges adds to the belief that the Halftown Council has put a heavy finger on their side of the scale of justice. Recently, 14 Cayuga families were served eviction notices from their Nation-owned homes. These cases would be heard in the Halftown Council's court, which is not recognized as real or valid by traditional Cayuga people.

We encourage you to read and take seriously the letter you received about these issues from the Seneca County Board of Supervisors, dated August 26, 2021. We second the opinions expressed in this correspondence, especially the concluding five paragraphs on page two of the letter.

The Federal Government currently recognizes Mr. Clint Halftown and his governing Council as the Cayuga Nation's official representative and leader. It is clear to us on Ithaca's Common Council that we have no right to say who should be in that role of leadership. That said, we do recognize that a large number of the Cayuga Nation's people do not recognize Mr. Halftown as their representative. The more traditional group within the Nation recognizes the Cayuga Council of Chiefs and Clan Mothers as their leaders. The traditional form of governance among the Cayuga people is one of coming to consensus agreement, not one of counting votes. Leaders are chosen by Clan Mothers and are then condoled as Chiefs of the respective Clans within the Nation. Mr. Halftown is not a condoled Chief. (In fact, his Heron Clan Mother, Bertie Hill, appears to have removed him from his ancillary leadership role in 2005, although Mr. Halftown denies her authority to do this).

The Ithaca City Common Council believes that the current state of affairs regarding leadership within the Cayuga Nation and its representation with the U.S. Federal Government is not working.

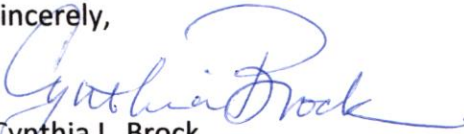
The City of Ithaca agrees with the Department of the Interior's decision last year to deny the Halftown Council's application for Land in Trust status. The City of Ithaca urges the Department of Interior to


continue to withhold approval of the Land in Trust application, (re-submitted by the Halftown Council, to be decided on this coming June), until the leadership dispute within the Cayuga Nation is resolved. Currently, the conditions that the initial rejection were based on are fundamentally unchanged.


We fear continued violence and escalating unfairness if governance within the Cayuga Nation is not significantly improved, and shared between all parties. We urge the BIA and the Interior Department to include the Cayuga Council of Chiefs and Clanmothers in serious discussion and study of these leadership issues.


We ask that all members of the Cayuga Nation be heard and included when it comes to representation with the U.S. Federal Government. We ask that you denounce violence and economic favoritism on all sides.


Sincerely,

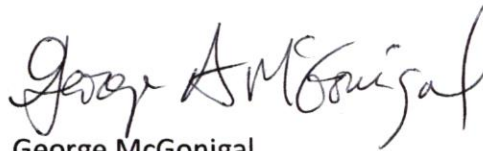

Cynthia L. Brock
First Ward Alderperson



Phoebe Brown
Second Ward Alderperson


Jeffrey Barken
Third Ward Alderperson

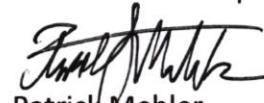

George DeFendini
Fourth Ward Alderperson



Robert Gesualdo Cantelmo
Fifth Ward Alderperson


George McGonigal
First Ward Alderperson


Ducson Nguyen
Second Ward Alderperson


Robert Gearhart
Third Ward Alderperson


Patrick Mehler
Fourth Ward Alderperson


Laura Lewis
Acting Mayor, Fifth Ward Alderperson

cc to:

Honorable Kathy Hochul, Governor, New York State
Honorable Charles Schumer, U.S Senator
Honorable Kirsten Gillibrand, U.S. Senator
Honorable John Katko, U.S. Congressman



Seneca County
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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August 26, 2021

Debra Anne Haaland, Secretary of the Interior
United States Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Darryl LaCounte, Director
Bureau of Indian Affairs
MS-4606
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Kimberly Bouchard
Eastern Regional Office
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545 Marriott Drive Suite 700
Nashville, Tennessee 37214

Re: Cayuga Indian Nation, Seneca County, State of New York

The purpose of this letter is to bring to your attention the concerns of the Seneca County Board of Supervisors with the ongoing actions of the designated federal representative of the Cayuga Indian Nation and the impact of such actions on the people of Seneca County.

For more than forty years, the people of Seneca County have had to deal with the assertion of sovereign rights by the Cayuga Indian Nation. The significant impacts include the loss of millions of dollars in property tax revenue to the local governments and school districts from tribal fee interest land without any reduction in services required to be provided, the deployment of an apparently illegitimate tribal police force, erosion of property rights, and confusion as to civil rights and obligations for both tribal and non-tribal members of the local community.

For the past decade, actions taken by the faction of the Cayuga Indian Nation led by Clint Halftown as the currently recognized federal representative have caused unrest, civil strife and issues of public safety.

In fact, the decision of your agency to deny the "Land into Trust" application of the Cayuga Indian Nation was based in part on the pattern of oppression, violence, and threats of physical and economic abuse towards members of the Nation's local community, let alone the public in general.

The 3:00 a.m. attack on commercial and personal interests by Mr. Halftown's paramilitary "security forces" on February 22, 2020, and the continued alleged harassment by the Halftown Cayuga Nation Police, of both tribal and community members, are but a few sad examples of the actions of the current tribal leadership under Mr. Halftown.

Seneca County recognizes that the Cayuga Indian Nation can be a valuable partner in our community, but that partnership requires tribal leadership that accepts responsibility for its actions and the negative impact that those actions have on their own people and our community at large.

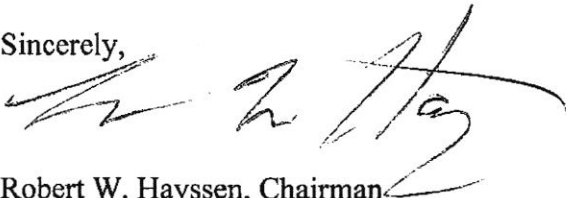
If the current designated leadership of the Cayuga Indian Nation cannot accept the diversity of views of its own people, then how can we, Seneca County, expect that same leadership to act responsibly and reasonably in the future?

We do not suggest that the Seneca County Board of Supervisors can pick and choose who we believe represents the Cayuga Indian Nation as the designated federal representative. However, we can share our experience with both Halftown's leadership and that of the Gayogohónq' Council of Chiefs. It is clear to us that the commitment to fairness and cultural values of the Gayogohónq' Council of Chiefs offers our communities a better path forward to understanding and a positive model for the future.

The Seneca County Board of Supervisors urges you and the Bureau to examine the impact that the Bureau's designation of Mr. Halftown as the representative of the Cayuga Indian Nation has had on the day-to-day life and culture of the Cayuga people.

We suggest that you review not only the tribal leadership history, but also consider that if Mr. Halftown and his leadership council cannot be trusted to lead their own people justly and fairly, alternative leadership should be seriously considered for recognition.

Sincerely,

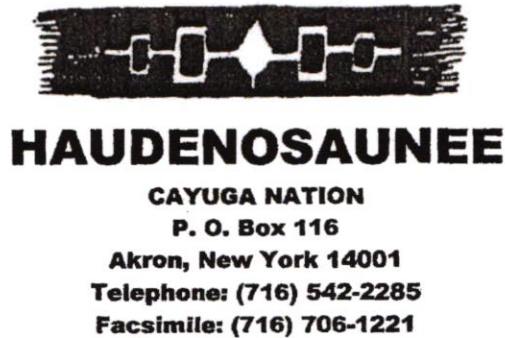


Robert W. Hayssen, Chairman
Board of Supervisors

SENECA COUNTY

RWH/de/ml

cc: U.S. Senator Charles Schumer
U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand
U.S. Congressman Tom Reed
U.S. Congressman John Katko
NY Senator Pamela Helming
NY Assemblyman Brian Manktelow
NY Assemblyman Jeff Gallahan



AFFIDAVIT

STATE OF NEW YORK :
COUNTY OF SENECA : ss:

BERNADETTE HILL, pursuant to Cayuga Nation and Haudenosaunee law and customs, and under the penalty of perjury, hereby affirms that:

1. I am the Clan Mother of the Heron Clan of the Cayuga Nation and have held this position since 1996.
2. William C. Jacobs is the condoled Chief of the Heron Clan, following his condolence on April 16, 2005; and he has been one of the Heron Clan representatives on the Cayuga Nation Council of Chiefs since the early 1990's.
3. Daniel Hill is one of the Heron Clan representatives on the Cayuga Nation Council of Chiefs and has been so since July of 2005.
4. Karl Hill is a Faithkeeper of the Heron Clan and has been so since April of 2005.
5. Tammy VanAernam is a Faithkeeper of the Heron Clan and has been so since April of 2005.
6. As Heron Clan Mother, I removed Clint Halftown of his previous duties as a Heron Clan representative on July 3, 2005.

AR-000153

AR-000153

AFFIDAVIT: BERNADETTE HILL

Page 2 of 2

June 5, 2011

Bernadette Hill

Subscribed to before me this

5 day of June, 2011

STATE of New York
County of SENECA
Alice M. Burton

Alice M. Burton

NOTARY PUBLIC

01844901512

Exp 07/20/2013

Bernadette Hill
BERNADETTE HILL

AR-000154

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