



# Kahnawà:ke Ratitsénhaiens

*Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke*

P.O. Box 720 Kahnawà:ke Mohawk Territory JOL 1B0

Phone: (450) 632-7500 Fax: (450) 638-5958

Web Site: [www.Kahnawake.com](http://www.Kahnawake.com) E-mail: [communications@mck.ca](mailto:communications@mck.ca)

Enhsakotò:kénhte Nitiotié:ren Tsi Ietsenhaientákhwa

## Tsi Nahóten Karihwanákere No'nenk News Release

### **MCK sends response to Haudenosaunee Chief**

#### **For immediate release**

**(Kahnawake – 3, Ohiarikhó:wa/July 2013)** The Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke (MCK) wishes to inform Kahnawà'kehró:non that Chief & Council have sent a response to Chief Sid Hill (Tadodaho), who had sent letters to several Iroquois communities. The MCK received its copy of the letter on 21, Onerahtohkó:wa/May.

Chief Hill's letter, which was not specifically addressed to Kahnawà:ke, contained statements and positions that the MCK felt compelled to respond to.

The response letter clarifies the MCK's position in several matters and includes a Kahnawà:ke historical perspective. Additionally, a copy of Kahnawà:ke's Vision Statement is attached to illustrate the direction that the community wishes to follow and that the MCK supports.

"We are committed to attempt to find ways to build bridges between our people regardless of what appears to be an exclusionary position directed to us," said Grand Chief Michael Ahríhron Delisle, Jr., who signed the letter on behalf of Chief & Council. "We support *all* our people as we work together to move forward."

The letter is attached.

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*For information, please contact:*  
Joe Delaronde, Political Press Attaché  
Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke  
450-632-7500, [joe.delaronde@mck.ca](mailto:joe.delaronde@mck.ca)

STRENGTH  
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# Mohawk Council of Kahnawake

P.O. Box 720  
Kahnawake Mohawk Territory J0L 1B0

*Tsi Ietsenhaientáhkwá*  
"OFFICE OF THE COUNCIL OF CHIEFS"



Tel.: (450) 632-7500  
Fax: (450) 632-7276  
Website: [www.kahnawake.com](http://www.kahnawake.com)

25 Ohiari:ha/June 2013

Chief Sidney Hill, Tadodaho  
Haudenosaunee,  
Onondaga Nation  
Via Box 319-B  
Nedrow, New York  
13120

## **For Immediate Release Kahnawà:ke June 25, 2013**

Dear Tadodaho Sid Hill:

We, as the Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke ("MCK"), acknowledge receipt of your letter on the issue of Elected Councils and Traditional governance.

Our response to your letter must be one which raises the facts of our specific history, as your letter was sent as a blanket statement to all communities rather than tailored to the individual communities and their background history and the developments and goals achieved over time.

Kahnawà:ke's Vision is really what dictates the direction our community intends to follow. The Vision Statement of the community of Kahnawà:ke was worked on by the community during 2010 and through the process of written essays by youth, adults and elders, and surveys conducted throughout the community, and four community workshops, they developed the objectives to be focused on by our people for the next twenty years. It is definitely a utopian statement and we hope that all these visions can become reality. It addresses all the wishes of our community, the hopes of a future for our elders, youth, and men and women. It looks towards a community able to utilize its resources and becoming self-sufficient. It hopes for fluency in our Language, and it recognizes the form of government that applies to our Nationality, which is inclusive of all our people, and gives respect to all our voices. A copy of this Vision Statement is included with this letter. Certainly there needs to be much work to achieve the goals set out in the Vision, and there needs to be an operational plan, which would include the entire community, whether they are traditional or any other affiliation.

As far as simply giving over leadership of our community, this is not going to happen easily. We have a large population that we are responsible for. The electorate needs and deserves to be heard on this topic, they simply cannot be abandoned. We are responsible to our entire community and not to any one specific group or special interest. We see that our people must move forward together as we have done in the past.

The Mohawk community of Kahnawà:ke has a long history dating back to before first contact and following the various colonial wars entered by our community we became a community of Seven Nations. Our system of governance from that time was selection of leadership by clan. In more recent times, such as in 1843 and earlier dates, the clan system of selection of chiefs under the Seven Nations Traditional Chiefs was a standard for selection of chiefs, that is, chiefs were elected for three year terms by their respective clans.

Elections are not a novel way of selecting leadership in our community and we have records of the elected leadership dating back to the early 1800's well previous to the introduction of the Indian Act in 1889. Elected Councils at Kahnawà:ke continue to be a fact of governance and we as elected chiefs are successors in interest to the historic development of our community. Given the colonial wartime events and the mixture of Indigenous nations in our community we continued to use clanship as the unifying means to seek representation for our leadership.

Governance of our community has faced terribly difficult issues over time. As a Council we have fought to the full extent of our power to support Kahnawake's rights, we've protected our lands through negotiating our own treaties either as the Caughnawagas, the Seven Indian Nations of Canada, or the Iroquois of the Sault, or the Gens du Sault, with the English and French and we continue to survive as a people. The significant dates for those Kahnawà:ke treaties are 1666, 1692, 1700, 1701, 1735, 1753, 1754, 1760, 1763, and 1796. We also petitioned Canada in 1888, to have the Indian Advancement Act, precursor of the Indian Act, applicable to Kahnawà:ke.

As a Council we have consistently fought to protect Kahnawà:ke 's rights and lands, and ensure the survival of our people. We have promoted all traditional aspects of our identity and in response to your comment that we have appropriated symbols, philosophies and national character of the Haudenosaunee we can state that there is no property in belief, and if the Kaianere:kowa is a document made for all mankind then do not suggest that Peace is only for the minority.

As the MCK we have argued for our community's benefit and we have not jeopardized all that we hold dear to our spirit and our roots. The fact that we refer to principles that are common to all of us is a good thing. If we consider the impact of agreements into the long term or seven generations forward we understand this to be our way of providing protections for the future.

Colonization had its effect on the Haudenosaunee and the central fire itself. Alliances with the British in the mid to late 1600's and inconsistent support against the French led to a withdrawal from the war like stance. With the arrival of French troops who devastated a number of Mohawk communities, we were forced to negotiate a peace. The Treaty of 1666, permitted colonizers to frequent the south shore of the St. Lawrence River within close proximity to where the Kahnawà:ke community had resettled along with the Oneida and Onondaga centuries earlier. The Fur trade with its accompanying warfare to establish a monopoly on furs was the preoccupation of Kahnawà:ke at this time and we engaged in battles against our brothers with their British allies at this time. Some of our territory was firmed up through two French land deeds in 1680 called the Seigneury of Sault St Louis. A retaliatory raid by the Haudenosaunee at Lachine in 1689 led Kahnawà:ke into significant retaliation in 1704 at Deerfield, Mass.. But before all else the Treaty of 1701 first negotiated by the French with the Onondagas in 1700 was signed by the Haudenosaunee both at Albany and Montreal. The Kahnawàkeró:non as the Iroquois of the Sault were signatory in our own right to this treaty and to many other significant treaties, as previously stated, to guarantee our standing and protect our territories.

The Kahnawàkeró:non were also active throughout the 1700's at entering treaties between the French and the English and the Haudenosaunee as well as the New York Commissioners of Indian Affairs in 1735 to renew peace and friendship with New York and the Iroquois Confederacy. In spite of treaties agreeing to peace and friendship, Kahnawà:ke sought neutrality on the issue of a possible war between the English and the French from 1740's. In the 1750's secret negotiations at Montreal involved Kahnawà:ke and most of the Haudenosaunee nations and we renewed our alliance with New York. The following year we allied ourselves with the French at the Battles of Lake George, Oswego and Ft. Wm. Henry. The following year we allied ourselves with the English against the French by remaining neutral during the final battles between the English and the French. In 1760 the Treaty of Oswegatchie was signed at Kahnawà:ke between the English and Kahnawà:ke. We were to be protected in our lands and an open road for trade was established.

We also returned English prisoners. In 1763 General Gage at Montreal decided that the Jesuits no longer were to be considered as temporal owners of our lands and he declared our lands exclusively for the Kahnawà:ke. The Royal Proclamation of 1763 was based on the Treaty of Oswegatchie with clauses promising protections for our lands.

From the foregoing it can be noted that the community of Kahnawà:ke and its elected council are not misrepresenting ourselves to any external agencies or limiting the significance of the Haudenosaunee in its system of governance. The facts of our history over the past four hundred years have shown the direction our community has taken to move forward, collectively.

As far as endeavoring into the international arena we have supported all ventures by our people to increase our status as a people throughout Turtle Island. Wherever our indigenous presence is invited we will be sure to participate. While we are all rooted in the same territory and share a common heritage or ancestry, we have experienced growth in a different way and yet we remain Onkwéhon:we to the core, carrying forth our common principles of belief and our language and government.

As far as the regrowth of traditional governance at Kahnawà:ke we can state that since 1924 there has been movement for a return to traditional government. In 1927 the Grand Council met here and established a council fire. In 1934 two 'traditionalist' band councilors were elected. In 1938 four men of Kahnawà:ke wrote to the Governor General Lord Dunsuir to advise that we would cease to follow the Indian Act or elected form of government. In 1979 there was a community direction to move to a form of traditional government. In 2002 the elected council reconfirmed its intention to follow through the enhancement and support for traditional values and government.

Concerning the eight points of jurisdiction you can see that jurisdiction over these subject matters requires considerable discussion amongst all our people and true understanding of our style of governance and history. You can appreciate the amount of work that would be required to enhance our political structure in our community. We are committed to our community, to the electorate who support us and indicate our direction forward, and any future revitalization and transformation must by right be inclusive and democratic.

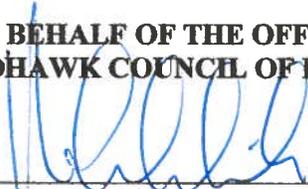
In order to clarify some of the points made in your letter of May 16, 2013, we offer the following statements:

- We do not “exist” outside the Circle Wampum. We exist as a contributing part of Kahnawà:ke, our community.
- We have not “commandeered” the symbols, philosophies or national character of the Confederacy. We believe that these belong by right to all our people if we are to be inclusive.
- Our interest in International affairs is not to “supplant” the “legitimate voice” of our communities. We are a legitimate voice in Kahnawà:ke. We do not act in the interest of our colonial masters because we do not have any.
- If we are “colonizing culture” and “morphing decolonization into a meaningless apparition of cultural revitalization and transformation” by offering language and cultural teachings to our people who work for Kahnawà:ke, then I guess we are guilty as charged. We suggest you speak to our people who have benefited themselves and all of our community by these inappropriate actions and gauge for yourself the results.
- You speak of a “proposed remedy to standardize governance” for Kahnawà:ke. We are very interested to see what this plan consists of, as this has been an outstanding question throughout our history of internal “discussions”.
- We continue, and struggle at times, to pursue the best for Kahnawà:ke in dialogue with municipalities, provinces and the federal government. Until our community is educated, involved, and agrees to change this direction, we will continue to strive for what we believe is in the best interest of our collectivity.

We are committed to attempt to find ways to build bridges between our people regardless of what appears to be an exclusionary position directed to us. We support all our people as we assist them to find the way forward.

In Peace and Friendship,

**ON BEHALF OF THE OFFICE OF THE COUNCIL OF CHIEFS  
MOHAWK COUNCIL OF KAHNAWÀ:KE**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Grand Chief Michael Ahrhron Delisle Jr

MD/bm/062513/ChiefSHill,Tadodaho

## Shared Vision Statement for Kahnawà:ke (Final)

It is with great pleasure and pride that the Kahnawà:ke Vision Committee presents to the Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke the Shared Vision Statement for Kahnawà:ke, created through consultation with Kahnawa'kehró:non in November of 2009.

*In 2029, Kahnawa'kehró:non know, understand and live our roles and responsibilities as Onkwehón:we. Onkwehonwehnéha (Kanien'kéha) is the main language of communication in the home and community. Through our language and the daily practice of our culture we promote our strong collective identity. Kaianere'kó:wa, with its teachings of Skén:nen, Ka'satsténhsera and Ka'nikonhrí:io, is our guiding principle.*

*Kahnawà:ke is a socially, politically and spiritually unified community. All Kahnawa'kehró:non respectfully co-exist harmoniously and peacefully in a clean and safe environment. We are a community of close-knit families maintaining our connection with each other; where elders are admired, treasured and called upon; where children are safe, provided guidance and loved. We are well on the path to healthy mind, body and spirit. We live and teach our spirituality through our ceremonies and festivals as a way of elevating our spirit.*

*Kahnawà:ke is an independent self-governing community in control of our opportunities. All people are treated equally. The people are the government and have a voice in the direction of the future. We are an economically self-sufficient community with an expanded land base, where individuals are provided opportunities and encouraged to succeed. All Kahnawa'kehró:non are well- and fully-educated in mainstream and Onkwehón:we philosophies, confident in who we are .*

*We live in respectful co-existence with the peoples of the world and Mother Earth. We protect and defend our determination and territory with decisions based on our principles. We are proud and confident about our future.*