

STRENGTH

PEACE

UNITY

Mohawk Council of Kahnawake



P.O. Box 720

Kahnawake Mohawk Territory J0L 1B0

OFFICE OF THE COUNCIL OF CHIEFS

Tel.: (450)632-7500

Fax: (450)638-5958

Website: www.kahnawake.com

OPEN LETTER TO COMMUNITY

February 14, 2017

As we are all aware, the *Kahnawà:ke Membership Law* of 2004 was the result of extensive consultations that took place over several years. This Law was viewed as another step in our historic struggle to survive as Kanien'kehá:ka of Kahnawà:ke.

Over the past few years, there have been several Community meetings held on the issue of non-Indigenous individuals residing illegally within the Mohawk Territory of Kahnawà:ke. Chief & Council, along with the community, continues to discuss and propose strategies on how to address this matter. The *Kahnawà:ke Membership Law*, which is currently in the process of being amended and will soon enter the Second Hearing phase of the Community Decision Making Process. There is a newly-proposed Kahnawà:ke Residency Law in its preliminary stages that will address the challenge of enforcement.

A key component of the law states that: all members who married or commenced a common law relationship with a non-Indigenous person after May 22, 1981 have breached their responsibilities as a Kanien'kehá:ka of Kahnawà:ke and have violated the Law. This principle has remained within the community and has been part of Kahnawà:ke law since both the 1981 *Moratorium on Mixed Marriages* and the 1984 *Kahnawake Mohawk Law* (both have been repealed and replaced with the current Law). At a special Community meeting on Membership and Residency held on October 12, 2016 it was abundantly clear that people still support the original principles from the 1981 Moratorium: that, as a place of residence, Kahnawà:ke is for Onkwehón:we (Indigenous people).

As stated above, the Law is currently undergoing revisions and an updated draft will be released to the community in the near future for review. Should any Kanien'kehá:ka of Kahnawà:ke believe that changes need to be made to the Law, the Community Decision Making Process is the proper avenue to discuss these concerns and come to community consensus on their issues.

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We do not support any individual or group taking issues to outside courts or tribunals. This is *our* community, and together we will decide our future through our laws and our customs – not external Governments, nor their courts that support individual rights before that of the Collective.

In closing, we strongly encourage open dialogue on this issue and insist that all Kahnawa'kehró:non, no matter what position you take on this complex issue, remain peaceful and respectful.

Skén:nen
(In Peace and Friendship),

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

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OPEN LETTER TO THOSE NON-INDIGENOUS PERSONS NOT ELIGIBLE TO RESIDE IN KAHNAWAKE AFTER 1981

February 14, 2017

The Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke has sent most, if not all, of you letters explicitly stating that you are here illegally and are in contravention of the *Kahnawà:ke Membership Law* (“the Law”) which has been created by the collective will of the People. In the letter, we asked that you contact the Membership Portfolio Chiefs to make arrangements to vacate the Territory or to provide proof that you have a residence outside of the community. If you have not yet done so, we ask that you take the letter seriously and govern yourselves accordingly, as the next action step will be implemented on May 1, 2017. The Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke is entrusted to uphold all laws created for and by our People. This Law is of paramount importance as it is another link in the unbroken chain of our historic struggle to survive as Kanien’kehá:ka of Kahnawà:ke.

All non-Indigenous persons residing in the Mohawk Territory of Kahnawà:ke who came onto the Territory after May 22, 1981 who are not listed as non-member residents pursuant to the Law are hereby put on notice again that you are violating the Law and disrespecting the customs and will of the Kanien’kehá:ka of Kahnawà:ke.

While we invite all people to visit our community and encourage everyone to learn about our culture and traditions, that invitation does not extend to those illegally residing within the Territory.

Skén:nen (In Peace and Friendship),

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