

STRENGTH  
PEACE  
UNITY

# Mohawk Council of Kahnawake

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**(Kahnawà:ke – 3 Onerahtókha/April 2008)** The following Letter to the Editor was submitted to the Montreal Gazette in response to an editorial that ran in the Monday, 31 Enniskó:wa/March edition of the paper.

Though the Gazette chose not to publish the letter, the Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke felt that it would be appropriate to inform the community that it has, indeed, taken action to defend our interests and integrity.

*Dear Editor,*

*This letter is a response to the Gazette's editorial on Monday, March 31.*

*While the first part of the editorial hits the mark (“Native leaders are fed up with the human toll and social damage drug activity inflicts on their communities”), the second part highlights the insensitivity that the general population has towards our situation in Kahnawà:ke.*

*The tobacco trade has become an important industry within our territory. The so-called “contraband” cigarettes that you speak of are produced by Native companies operating on Native territory. The problem arises in the fact that we, by virtue of the Indian Act, do not pay taxes on goods delivered to Native reserves. Though this may sound ideal to many people, it must be explained that this same “blessing” also limits our ability to do business in the “conventional” manner. That is why you don't see a Tim Horton's sitting at the foot of the Mercier Bridge – even though it would seem like an ideal location.*

*In effect, we have been forced - by legislation that we did not create - to do business by non-conventional means. Further, let us remind you that this legislation was created with the express intent of assimilating our people into the mainstream of Canadian society.*

*Admittedly, there are unresolved issues in regulating and administering the tobacco industry. While we did not create the problem, we continually find ourselves in the position of defending our right to an economy. The industry has flourished because of the situations created beyond our borders and by policies maintained by the governments. Despite these challenges, we are committed to work towards creating a solution that is beneficial to everyone. In the meantime, we will continue to support an industry that has*

*given our people the rare opportunity to prosper despite the best efforts of governments to have us quietly fade away.*

*Furthermore, as a recognized policing agency, the Kahnawà:ke Peacekeepers should be afforded the same respect and recognition that is afforded to the other policing agencies mentioned in your editorial. That you chose to use a lower case spelling of the word 'peacekeepers' is not lost on us. The fact of the matter is that the Kahnawà:ke Peacekeepers are our police force – recognized by both federal and provincial jurisdictions. They led and conducted last week's operations with the assistance of RCMP, Sûreté du Québec and other Native police officers. If this bothers you to the point that you feel the need to refer to them in a condescending and paternalistic manner, then shame on you. That's Peacekeepers, with a capital 'P.'*



*Michael Ahrírhon Delisle, Jr.  
Grand Chief  
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