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Tsi Nahóten Karihwanákere No'nenk News Release

Grand Chief responds to “Mohawk Nation News” re: Membership

For immediate release

(Kahnawá:ke – 27, Seskehkó:wa/September 2007) Grand Chief Michael Ahrírhon Delisle, Jr. is responding to an e-mail attributed to the “Mohawk Nation News,” written by Kahentinetha Horn. The e-mail, which is widely distributed, presents the opinions of Ms. Horn on the topic of the recent suspension of activities of the Council of Elders, of which she is a member.

“After reading the e-mail, I felt I had an obligation to send a message to the community,” said Chief Delisle. “Neither the community nor the Council of Elders deserves to be burdened with this type of misinformation. It needs to be corrected.”

Chief Delisle’s response, as well as the original “Mohawk Nation News” e-mail, is attached.

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Letter to the Community from Grand Chief Michael Ahrírhon Delisle, Jr.

Wa'tkwanonhwera:ton/Greetings,

I feel it is my obligation to respond to a document being circulated under the guise of the "Mohawk Nation News" which, as many people are aware, is written and published by Kahntinetha Horn. The document contains inaccuracies and falsehoods that cannot go unchallenged and/or uncorrected.

First, Ms. Horn says that I "unilaterally suspended the activities of the Council of Elders." This is untrue. The Council of Elders acknowledged that there were problems with the law and how it was being applied. The decision to suspend activities was arrived at mutually. More on that later.

I take great issue of Ms. Horn's allegation that I spoke in an angry or hostile tone at the meeting. That is simply not true; it is also not my style. First and foremost, I am a community member who adheres to the values I was brought up with. In my capacity, I act as a chairperson of meetings on a weekly basis; I am fully aware that, when chairing meetings such as this, it is always important for me to stay away from emotional displays that could adversely affect the fair exchange of ideas. It is something I take pride in.

Ms. Horn then alleges that the Elders were "shocked to read in the Eastern Door that Mike Delisle had suspended the activities of the Council of Elders" on September 7th. For the record, I didn't enact the suspension; it was very clearly a decision reached by both organizations, *which came after the Council of Elders made the suggestion*.

Ms. Horn alleges that the Elders were not allowed to present their point of view, which is completely untrue. I find it very strange that Ms. Horn – who, for those who may not be aware, is a member of Council of Elders – said nothing during the meeting that caused her so much concern and consternation.

I find myself deeply troubled by the following statement: "The Council of Elders was appointed to conduct a quasi judicial function. Its neutrality is important. Members should be protected from arbitrary removal from office, *just like any judge anywhere else in the world*. This speaks volumes about Ms. Horn's motivations. It appears that she feels she is qualified to act in that capacity. I am unsure if other Elders would be comfortable being referred to as "judges."

I am most appalled at Ms. Horn's treatment of the Membership Registrar, and the public pressure she is attempting to create against a person who is performing an already difficult job. By accusing the Registrar of performing acts outside of her actual responsibilities and insinuating deeper conspiracy is grounds, at the very least, for an apology.

However, in the interest of fairness, I do strongly agree with one single statement in her document: "If the community doesn't like the rules, it should change the law." That is

something the Mohawk Council of Kahnawá:ke has stated consistently. The Law isn't perfect; indeed, a topic with such a long history of controversy and strong opinion has supporters and detractors on both sides. But it is our law, created and administered by our own people. We all share an obligation to ensure that it is applied fairly. When those whose responsibility it is to administer the law themselves ask that it be suspended until the law can be reviewed and revisited, we have the responsibility to do that.

I strongly encourage the People of Kahnawá:ke to contact me to discuss your comments, questions and suggestions regarding this topic.

Nia:wen,

OFFICE OF THE COUNCIL OF CHIEFS

Grand Chief Michael Ahrírhon Delisle, Jr.

**WHAT DOES THE “RULE OF LAW” MEAN IN KAHNAWAKE?
BAND COUNCIL ATTACKS “COUNCIL OF ELDERS” AS
PART OF GENOCIDE PLAN**

MNN. Sept. 24, 2007. Every community has a set of rules to conduct its affairs. One of these in Kahnawake is the Membership Law.

Before the European invasion the Mohawk lived according to the Kaianereh’kowa, Great Law of Peace. Many still do. In 1897 the colonial government of Canada illegally imposed foreign laws known as the “Indian Act”. Today the majority object to the illegal band council system and will not take part in their elections. However, this system is the only way the Mohawk can get access to the portion of our assets that these foreigners stole from us.

The people of Kahnawake spent more than 20 years developing the Membership Law. The people wanted to decide for themselves who could be a member of our community instead of letting Indian Affairs impose foreign notions that are destructive to us and our culture. On May 14th 2004 the people established a Council of Elders at a public meeting. Their task was to apply the people’s Membership Law. So far over 90% of the applicants have been found to meet the requirements.

This isn’t good enough for band council chief, Mike Delisle. At a closed meeting, without notifying the public, he unilaterally suspended the activities of the Council of Elders.

Is this legal? No way. Not unless you believe in

dictatorships. Mike Delisle has completely sidelined the people of Kahnawake and cut them out of taking part in the decision-making process.

This brings to mind a situation that occurred in 2002 in Venezuela, a country with great oil wealth that has been held under the thumb of an oligarchy that kept most of the people in poverty. The 5% minority monopolized the resources, power and wealth.

When President Hugo Chavez was democratically elected, he educated the people about their democratic constitution. He began to reorganize Venezuela so that the assets were fairly distributed. This infuriated the oligarchy. They organized a CIA backed coup. They invaded the Presidential Palace and abducted President Chavez. They declared that the elected government was disbanded. They immediately started a brutal crackdown, trying to disband popular institutions. The army was ordered to shoot anyone who objected.

The people refused to accept the return of the old dictatorship. A huge crowd gathered around the Presidential Palace. The soldiers would not take orders from the usurpers to shoot the people and decided to defend the constitution instead. Within two days the usurpers were kicked out of the Presidential Palace and President Chavez was returned by the people. He did not take revenge. He simply confirmed that the country was a popular republic and would continue to be ruled according to the people's constitution. No one has the power to suspend the operation of the law. Hugo Chavez said, "If anyone does not like what I am doing, they can vote me out of office". Only the people can change the law.

Mike Delisle was not been as brutal as the Venezuelan oligarchy but he has grabbed power like a dictator. He took it upon himself to suspend the Membership Law. Mike Delisle has managed to create a climate of fear. This is why he's been able to push the Council of Elders around. Let's take a closer look at what Mike Delisle and the band council did.

At the beginning of September 2007 the Council of Elders was called by Jenny McComber of the Registrar's office to pick up "your envelope" at the band council office. No explanation was given.

Under threat of suspension Mike Delisle ordered us to attend an "urgent" meeting at 6:00 pm on September 5th at the "Golden Agers' Club". Mike Delisle spoke in a hostile and angry tone of voice as if he was scolding kids instead of speaking respectfully to the community's elders, some of who are in their late 70s.

Mike Delisle reviewed a "secret" 24-page document entitled "A Review of the Kahnawake Membership Law". This document was not the result of consultation with the community. The Council of Elders was not given copies of this list of allegations. There was no indication who wrote it.

On behalf of the Council of Elders T.B. carefully summarized the allegations that had been made by unnamed persons. T.B. asked for a copy of the document and time to discuss it.

Then band councilor, Rhonda Kirby, a former member of the Council of Elders, repeated the allegations. She was followed by Timmy Norton, a member of the Council of Elders who used to be a band councilor. He stood behind us and made further allegations, in the course of which he admitted that he had breached the oath of confidentiality. He's the one who told the television station about a decision before the applicant had been notified. He punctuated his tirade by resigning from the Council of Elders. The Council of Elders agreed to suspend application hearings until such matters were cleared up.

Friday morning, September 7th the Council of Elders was shocked to read in the Eastern Door newspaper that Mike Delisle had suspended the activities of the Council of Elders. The elders were given no opportunity to see the evidence or to defend themselves against the charges. Just like the Venezuelan oligarchs, Mike Delisle made a public announcement of his "fait accompli".

On Monday, September 10th T.B. of the Council of Elders supposedly received an email from Alexis Shackleton of

the Membership Registrar's office declaring that the Council of Elders would no longer receive any support services from her office and that we would have no access to a lawyer. The Council of Elders is required to keep minutes, write letters and review all administration and files that are kept by the Registrar.

The band council has followed a procedure that seems to have violated our tradition in a number of ways. The issue to be considered was not formulated by a neutral party. Mike Delisle told the elders that he is selecting a third party [maybe with the help of Indian Affairs?] to conduct his investigation. He is also hand picking the three members of the Council of Elders who will be involved with him.

According to Haudenosaunee practice, a council serving the public must be neutral and cannot be removed once they have been appointed. Mike Delisle seems to think the Council of Elders can be neutral so long as long as it does what he says. Councils serving the people are given a support staff that must remain neutral and may not take part in the decision making process.

The Council of Elders was appointed to conduct a quasi judicial function. Its neutrality is important. Members should be protected from arbitrary removal from office, just like any judge anywhere else in the world.

Before this matter erupted, the Council of Elders had run into some problems. The Registrar, Alexis Shackleton, whose role should be purely clerical, was giving the Council of Elders written instructions on how they should decide a case before the applicant was even heard. She also was placing persons on the membership roll who were not qualified, which were subsequently overturned by the Council of Elders.

The Council of Elders must make decisions based on the laws and customs of the people as set out in the Membership Law. There is no provision to usurp their decision making role. As it turns out, Alexis Shackleton is one of the authors of the report that Mike Delisle relied upon in his attempt to disband the Council of Elders.

Mike Delisle's suspension has no legal force or effect under any known concept of legality except totalitarian dictatorship. There was no evidence presented, no legal argument and the Council of Elders was not allowed to present its points of view. This violates the basic principles of procedural fairness that are recognized by most nations under international law

If the community doesn't like the rules, it should change the law. Mike Delisle is a member of the community. He has no more authority than anybody else to change it or to dictate how the Council of Elders applies it.

There has always been pressure from Indian Affairs as to who can be a member. What are Mike Delisle's motives? We understand that almost 4,000 people want to be enrolled. Perhaps many may or may not qualify according to the Membership Law. This reminds us of the situation that happened at Kanehsatake when James Gabriel was handing out membership cards prior to the 2005 election in the hope that it would garner him votes. This was done through Alexis Shackleton's counterpart, Jean Vincent, the Registrar at Kanehsatake.

The band council also wants more voters because it will get more money. The would-be Mohawks want tax free status, land, health and education benefits, to vote and take over Kahnawake. Is Indian Affairs planning to relocate the Mohawks to stop opposition to the expansion of the St. Lawrence Seaway, to build a ten-lane bridge right through the middle of Kahnawake and who knows what else! Somebody's got a long term plan here.

The band council hopes to "cash bleed" the Council of Elders. On September 24th the Elders paid for a meeting room from their own pockets. T.B. read the most recent dictate from the band council which appeared to declare that the Council of Elders can no longer meet except with the band council. This is a violation of the right of freedom of association that is guaranteed under international law. Mike Delisle seems to infer that it is "unlawful assembly" [according to who?]. Remember how the RCMP used to break up our longhouse meetings? Indian Affairs must be laughing at how they now have our own people suppressing us.

This looks like a hostile corporate takeover of Kahnawake by the powers that think they are. What kind of future is in store for our children and the generations to come? A dictatorship under the direction of Indian Affairs and Mike Delisle? The Mohawks of Kahnawake better speak up quick. Delisle and his cohorts have put a noose around our necks.

**Kahentinetha Horn
MNN Mohawk Nation News**

Contact Mike Delisle with your comments concerning his behavior at communications@mck.ca; send your concerns to loudspirits@hotmail.com and easterndoor@axess.com

Nia:wen,

**Kahentinetha Horn
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