

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
United Nations
New York, N.Y.



May 10 – 21, 2004-05-17

A joint statement from the Indigenous World Association and the Indigenous Media Network

Mr. Chairman,

We bring you greetings from the men, women and children of the Mohawk Nation at Kanehsatake which lies within the colonial boundaries of Canada.

My name is Tewatonhawitha Montour of the Wolf Clan on the Mohawk Nation.

I have come to speak about Bill S-24 and the new tri-partite policing agreement which are being implemented in our community. These agreements are an infringement on our sovereignty. Our community elders and children are suffering because of the conflict that these agreements have caused amongst our people. This has caused divisions within families, divisions in our schools, health services and in the community in general.

Our people have been banished from our territory by the courts denying them their only means of living taken away. Our people have been wrongfully charged by the courts because of policing issues and the threat of a police invasion of our community by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Surete Du Quebec supported by an Aboriginal police force.

Bill S-24 will make Mohawk Territory into a municipality and erode our ancestral rights and use to our land. This is a violation of our basic human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Canadian Governments use of referendums to force their legislation on our lands is against our traditional method of governance by consensus. Our traditional method of reaching consensus avoids conflict and avoids the confrontation that now exists and threatens our women and children.

I would like to invite the members of the Permanent Forum to visit our community and see first hand the situation that we live in. Do not judge our situation by what you read in the mainstream press or by statements made by the Canadian or Quebec Governments.

Mediation is the correct process to defuse the tension in Kanehsatake. Force of arms on either side will not bring peace. The mandate of the United Nations is find peaceful resolutions to disputes and, as part of the United Nations, we ask the Members Permanent Forum of Indigenous Issues to use their good offices to intervene and help settle this dispute and help bring peace to our community.

On behalf of the men, women and children of the Mohawk Nation at Kanehsatake,

I thank you for listening.

Tewatonhawitha Montour, Tel: 450-479-1099
96 Ahsennahson Road, Kanehsatake, Qc. Canada J0N 1E0