



HAUDENOSAUNEE

MOHAWK - ONEIDA - ONONDAGA - CAYUGA - SENECA - TUSCARORA

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STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF

KAHNAWAKE

A COMMUNITY OF THE

MOHAWK NATION

OF THE

HAUDENOSAUNEE SIX NATIONS IROQUOIS CONFEDERACY

Presented to the

Working Group on Indigenous Populations

Geneva, 1988

Madame Chairman,

My name is Norma Delaronde, Clan Mother, Turtle Clan, from Kahnawake, one of the communities of the Mohawk Nation. I have been asked by our delegation to deliver the statement on behalf of the Traditional people of Kahnawake. With me in our delegation are Frank Natawe, subchief, Turtle Clan; Brian Deer and Kenneth Deer from our administrative office in Kahnawake, and Ka-ne-ra-tha-ro-roks, a young representative. Also with us is Oroniateka, a condoled chief of the Mohawk Nation who holds the title "Tekarihoken", one of the fifty chiefs of the Covenant Circle, as defined by the Kaianerakowa, the Great Law of Peace, the Constitution of the of the Haudenosaunee, Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy. He is from the community of Ohsweken. Also with us is Bruce Elijah, Faithkeeper, of the Oneida Nation, who recited the Two Row Wampum Belt last Monday.

The Confederacy of the Haudenosaunee throughout its entire history of contact with the Europeans down to the nineteenth century has always declared itself to be independent of and not subject to other nations. This was made known to the Dutch, the French, the English, and other nations. Throughout the twentieth century, the Haudenosaunee has made it known to Canada and the United States that we are neither Canadian nor American. We are Haudenosaunee. We the Haudenosaunee have been, and continue to be firmly resolved not to allow ourselves to be absorbed by any process of assimilation.

The vision of world peace was a message of the Great Peacemaker, who founded our Confederacy long before the coming of the Europeans, and who planted the Great Tree of Peace on the Great Turtle Island.

We are here today to make a statement concerning the paramilitary invasion of Kahnawake on June 1st, 1988, by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), the federal police force of Canada, and how this invasion relates the standards for the rights of Indigenous nations and peoples. We would like to make it very clear that we are not here to make a complaint to the Working Group. There are other appropriate bodies within the structure of the United Nations to which we can submit an official complaint, and we will be doing so. We are here to show how this invasion relates to the standards that the Working Group on Indigenous Peoples is attempting to develop for the rights of Indigenous nations and peoples

The paramilitary operation carried out by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police is appropriately described by the word "invasion." Over two hundred RCMP officers armed with batons, standard service firearms and automatic weapons, descended on Kahnawake in an array of vehicles including buses, trucks, vans, some of which were equipped with overhead sniper platforms, a bomb disposal unit, a tow truck and cars.

The community of Kahnawake reacted immediately to the invasion. All entrances to Kahnawake, which is surrounded by the city of Montreal and its suburbs, were sealed off and blockaded by the people of the community, but not before the RCMP was able to exit from the community, and not without endangering the lives of many people, taking with them by force seventeen Mohawk nationals. All of them were subsequently released, but ten of them are still being subjected to an alien legal system in the form of arrest warrants. The ten Mohawk nationals are in effect unable to leave their community for fear of being arrested.

The issue over which the RCMP invaded the community of Kahnawake was ~~the sale of cigarettes by various retail outlets in~~ *an effort by the Canadian government to tax commerce within* the community of Kahnawake. To the Canadian and Quebec governments, the question was one of taxes and duties; to the people of Kahnawake, the question was one of jurisdiction, and sovereignty, particularly economic sovereignty. The issue was one of free trade within the territory of the Mohawk Nation and between the communities of the Mohawk Nation, whose territory is bisected by an alien border shared by two external powers—Canada and the United States. Our delegation would not be here today without exercising our right to trade within our territory.

That the Canadian Government and its federal police force, the RCMP, overreacted in a violent and unnecessary manner is supported in letters of protest to the Prime Minister of Canada, by Canada's own citizens.

The United Church of Canada, Montreal & Ottawa Conference, expressed its views as follows:

"The Executive ... express their abhorrence at the way in which the governments have violently overreacted to the issue of the selling of cigarettes. You do not resolve an issue like that by sending two hundred members of the RCMP, armed with automatic weapons into a community. It is my understanding that negotiations were taking place between the jurisdictions with regard to the selling of cigarettes and other items, and in the midst of negotiations, this tactic was chosen. Whose decision was it to send in the RCMP?"

"We feel that if violence erupts in and around aboriginal concerns, the violence will have been provoked by the Canadian Government and then blamed on the aboriginal people."

Opposition members of the House of Commons and Senate in the Parliament of Canada expressed their views ^{on the attack} as follows:

"The actions taken by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police were excessive and unnecessary. The issues which underlie the events earlier this month cannot be dealt with simply as questions of law enforcement. Unresolved political issues of jurisdiction predate these recent events and remain outstanding. As long as the fundamental political issues are not addressed in a serious way by the federal government, the base of the current conflict will remain."

At the end of January 1988, the Traditional people of the Mohawk Nation in Kahnawake, and the elective band council of Kahnawake, had both sent telexes to various ministers of the federal Canadian and Quebec provincial governments requesting peaceful discussions on the issue of ^{commerce at Kahnawake} ~~cigarette sales~~ and calling for a halt on rumors of impending raids, invasions, and physical action by Canadian and Quebec police forces. Within days, Quebec responded and informal unofficial discussions were initiated and took place between Quebec officials and representatives from Kahnawake. This process is still in place. The Canadian government responded with meaningless letters of acknowledgement from various ministries over a period of several months with no attempt on its part to begin talks and exhaust the possibilities of discussions. Canada's first meaningful response was the invasion of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

The situation with respect to standards for the rights of Indigenous nations peoples is as follows. Kahnawake is one of seven communities of the Mohawk Nation. The Mohawk Nation is part of the Haudenosaunee Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy. Despite the imposition of elected councils in Kahnawake and other Haudenosaunee communities by both the Canadian and United States governments in the past, the Great Law of Peace, the Constitution of the Haudenosaunee, still prevails in Kahnawake and other Haudenosaunee communities.

The Haudenosaunee are a lawful people, and have been exercising its laws and its political institutions long before the arrival of the Europeans. Constitutionally, the Haudenosaunee Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy is not, and has never been, part of Canada or the United States. Both Canada and the United States fear secession and separation. But the Confederacy of the Haudenosaunee has always been separate and apart from both Canada and the United States. It is, after all, possible for different nations of the world, Indigenous and otherwise, to be co-existing on the same lands and continents with their own respective laws and governments. This is a fundamental principle of the Two Row Wampum Belt.

The question is this: what is the Working Group on Indigenous Peoples, and its parent institutions in the United Nations, the Submission, the Commission on Human Rights, the EcoSoc Committee, going to do in the face of laws, constitutions, and governments of Indigenous nations that have existed prior to the arrival of colonial nations on their lands, and who have chosen not to be part of those colonial nations.

We know what we will do, the people of Kahnawake, and the rest of the Haudenosaunee Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy. We know what we will do. We will stand by and defend the Great Law of Peace of the Haudenosaunee. We will abide by the Two Row Wampum Belt, which was explained to you last Monday, and which now sits on my shoulder. You have your laws, ways and religions in your vessel, and we have our laws, ways and traditions in ours. The women, the men and the children will defend the Great Law of Peace and abide by the Two Row Wampum Belt.

We would like to table the following documents and papers for the Working Group's consideration: 1) The Royal Canadian Mounted Police Invasion of Kahnawake on June 1st, 1988; a Report; 2) The Sovereignty Position of the Kanienkehaka (Mohawk Nation), Kahnawake Territory, of the Haudenosaunee Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy, 3) The Two Row Wampum Belt, and 4) letters and correspondence pertaining to the RCMP invasion.

In closing, we thank you Madame Daes for your unflagging interest on behalf of the Indigenous Nations and Peoples, and we thank the members of the Working Group for their interest and work in the sixth session of the Working Group. We now leave you with the following thoughts and questions addressed to the observor nations present here today. They are from Deskaheh, a Chief of the Cayuga Nation, June 27, 1925:

"Do not hurry with your answers

"Do you believe? - really believe - that all peoples are entitled to equal protection of international law, now that you are so strong?

"Do you really believe - really believe - that treaty pledges should be kept? Think these questions over and answer them to yourselves.

"We are not as dependent in some ways as we were in the early days. We do not need interpreters now. We know your language and can understand your words for ourselves, and we have learned to decide for ourselves what is good for us. It is bad for any of our peoples' to take the advice of an alien people as to that."

Thank you Madame Chairman. That is all we have to say.