

# Great Law reading gaining momentum

By Jim Windle  
SIX NATIONS

There were not as many people attending the recital of the Great Law as expected, however, organizers and those who have been attending the 10 day marathon event are pleased and increasingly hopeful nonetheless.

The long planned recital began last Friday, and is expected to wrap up Sunday, August 19th.

Several recognized speakers of the Gayanashagowa, repre-

refused to endorse the event which caused some who had planned to attend from other territories not to come. On the recommendation of a few Clan Mothers and Faithkeepers, the Confederacy Chiefs withdrew any official support they initially might have shown towards the reading.

With or without the Confederacy Chiefs' blessing, organizers representing members of the Men's Fire saw the long neglected reading of the Great Peace of the Haudenosaunee as too important to cancel for reasons of political protocol.

But by the third day, even some staunch Confederacy adherents who were being discouraged to attend, began drifting in, including at least one sitting Confederacy Chief and a few Clan Mothers and Faithkeepers.

"It seems to be getting better all the time," said speaker Frank Miller. "We are making history here and I feel really good about it. This is really bringing minds together."

He also is taking notice of people who have begun to attend whom he didn't expect to see, which gives him great hope that what they are doing is important and impacting. Members of some of the families that spoke out against

spoken to are pleased with how things are going and they are encouraged by the mid-week attendance, which they anticipate will increase as the recital continues into the weekend.

Kanenhariyo, aka Seth Laforte, is proud to be one of the speakers along with the others whom he knows and respects as wisdom keepers.

According to him, although the last public reading of the Great Law may have been 28 years ago here at Six Nations, it has been done elsewhere.

"I know there was one five years ago in Tyendinega," he said. "There have also been partial readings done as well."



Kelly Curley

senting a number of Iroquois communities, relayed through the day-long recitals, dialogue and anecdotes relative to the Great Law, or Great Peace as some prefer to call it.

Traditional adherents of what is known by some as the Six Nations Constitution of Peace, which formed the Iroquois Confederacy, sat and listened with open ears to the words and spirit of peace brought many generations ago by the Peacemaker and Hiawatha, or Haiëñ'wa'tha.

People from several Haudenosaunee communities, some non-Haudenosaunee Onkwehon:we Nations and even a few interested settlers came and sat in designated ar-



Paul Deloronde

the event over protocol issues have been seen in attendance as well.

"It's been a long time coming to bring our community back together," he said.

Tuesday, organizers decided to move the reading from the Gaylord Powless Arena over to the Community Hall after receiving complaints of poor sound and hot, sticky conditions in the arena.

"That was a nightmare," said Miller. "We got rid of the noisy fans but then there was the problem of stagnant humid air and it didn't help the acoustics anyhow."

Miller and others we have



Seth Laforte

Either way, the regular reading of the Great Law of Peace is to be done more often than it has been, at least here at Six Nations.

Five years ago, according to event organizers, the idea of conducting such a wide ranging and large event was brought to the Confederacy Chiefs to organize, but nothing ever happened. That is why the men took it upon themselves to organize the event designed to renew understanding of the Great Law in the hearts of younger generations and revive unity and friendship between Haudenosaunee people here and throughout Iroquoia, as well as renewing alliances with other nations.

"It is very important because this is what reminds the people where we are headed," says Kanenhariyo. "When too much time passes people forget. That's just human nature."

He also sees the need for the foundation of the Great Law in the lives of young people who have never been exposed to it and have lost their identity and their hope, and for some, even the will to live.

"The Great Law could help many young people who too often see suicide as the only escape for themselves," he



Speakers and teachers of the Great law tag team their way throughout the public reading and discussion of the Gayanashagowa, the Great law of Peace. Over the course of the first three days of the ten day long recital, the attendance has been slowly growing. Some of the guest speakers include Paul Delaronde, Seth Laforte, Roger Jock, Francis Boots, Kelly Curley, Frank Miller, Lonnie Thomas and others. (Photos by Jim Windle)

said. "I think it can also play an important role in recovery. These are signs that there is something wrong."

He believes that when young people look towards the future these days, all they see is themselves being swallowed up in the white man's world.

"There is no people in the world who feel good about being absorbed by another people, anywhere," Kanenhariyo says. "We are in a state where things are so dysfunctional that people start to think, maybe it's too far, or too late. Maybe we are going to be swallowed

up."

The Great Law of Peace has the power to correct this way of thinking, however, one can not learn something they have not been taught, and that is why this reading is so very important, according to many we have spoken to at the recital.

"If individual families and clans once again begin to understand how much we have, and start getting together to discuss matters of importance again, it builds community and gives the children a sense of the future and maybe start striving towards living

by the Great Law. But people must take this knowledge and put it into action. If they do those kids won't be wandering around like I do wondering where do I belong," says Kanenhariyo.

He hopes the people will be inspired enough to begin to re-organize themselves back into their rightful clans and families.

He applauds the organizers whom he says took the initiative to try and fix the problem.

The recital continues all this week and is scheduled to end this Sunday.



Art Montour

reas around the arena floor as speakers tracked through the ancient political system which brought about peace between the Mohawk, Seneca, Oneida, Onondaga and Cayuga Nations after generations of hatred and war.

The event could have and probably would have attracted more people had it not become the centre of a controversy over protocol, only days before it was to begin. The Six Nations Confederacy Chiefs Council