

# Elected Chief wants to see Six Nations move forward

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## Exclusive to Tekawennake

The federal government of Canada is tweaking the Indian Act through omnibus legislation, and Elected Chief William Montour said Six Nations needs to step out from under the federal government and re-establish its sovereignty.

"Not the [self-determination] program as delivered by Indian Affairs," he said in a one-on-one interview with Tekawennake last Friday. "But determination as Six Nations decides it. We need to come together so we have a governance structure owned by the people. It's got to be owned by the people."

Montour said he'd like to see Six Nations become sovereign again by 2015, although he recognized gaining autonomy would probably take longer than two years. But should Six Nations members be successful in putting their heads together and re-inventing their own sovereignty, "I would ask Canada and Ontario to give us enabling legislation to recognize the

jurisdiction the people put together as their own," he said.

Asked if that was an indication he would run for Elected Chief again this fall, Montour said "right now, I'm done [as Chief]." After serving as Elected Chief for nearly 12 years continuous years, Montour said while he finds it rewarding to be able to help individuals who approach him, overall he finds the position "tiring and frustrating."

"In the big picture, I hope to see a young, dynamic person run for the office of Elected Chief," said Montour. He plans on running for council with the goal of serving as a councillor and sharing his knowledge, "So we don't have to keep going back to square one."

Another dream Montour would like to see fulfilled is the creation of a Seven Generations plan. "The problem with the Indian Act ... it doesn't allow for forward planning," he said. "I'd like to plan for more than the next election or the next federal election. We talk about seven generations, but we never plan for that. As a community, it is a critical thing that's

missing."

"We have to start working together," Montour. While representatives from Elected Council engage in lobbying the federal government, such as the meeting Montour and two other councillors had with Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Minister Bernard Valcourt on April 29, Montour said he wants to see the community work together for the good of all.

"That really hurts me when they say you're under the Indian Act," Montour said of Confederacy Chief Blake Bomberry's recently stated refusal to work with Elected Council. "I live and breathe this community. I am not under any government authority's thumb. We try to the best of our ability to get the best for the community."

The meeting with Valcourt late last month is hopefully a first step to better dialogue. Montour said Valcourt was

receptive to having further meetings. But being open to having more meetings and working to change the way the federal government treats First Nations are two different worlds right now, and Montour said he hopes to meet with James Anaya, the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Rights during the upcoming session of the UN Permanent Forum

on Indigenous Issues. Montour said Anaya will be invited to visit Six Nations when he comes to Canada, a visit anticipated to take place later this year after Canada finally gave Anaya permission to visit while presenting to the UN Human Rights Council in April.

Six Nations most wants to see some action on moving the stagnated land claims forward, and Montour thinks Anaya might be able to help with some pressure. "The dragging of Canada's feet in the resolution of land issues

has got to stop," said Montour. "It's putting a strain on the community, it's putting a strain on our neighbours."

Montour said the resolution of Six Nations land claims was brought forward during the meeting with Valcourt last month. "It was just a 'how do you do' meeting," said Montour, but the three council representatives took the opportunity to put the biggest issues "on his radar screen."

The federal Matrimonial Real Property law, the omnibus legislation "which is changing the Indian Act incrementally" after Harper said he wouldn't tweak the Act – and side-stepping consultation with First Nations – were also raised. "The big ones," Montour said, included water and the MRP, which would invite outside jurisdiction into Six Nations territory.

In terms of water, Montour said he is not against standards, but the government has "got the cart before the horse," because many First Nation communities lack the infrastructure needed to consistently provide clean drinking water.

The representatives also raised the topic of education

with Valcourt. "The Deputy Minister [Michael Wernick] and the Ontario Regional Director General [Joanne Wilkinson] were at the meeting," said Montour. "When we talked about education, they said we could have it Friday if we wanted, but there is no more money."

Gaining control over Six Nations land and money is another matter that "needs to change," but a lot appears to depend on community unity. "Without the people coming together, there's no future," said Montour.

Those divisions, however, do not appear to be any closer to resolution now than they were 89 years ago.

Montour said some might consider the present Confederacy Chiefs Council is not sanctioned by custom because "the Great Law says they need to have nine Mohawk Chiefs sitting at Council," and called for people to set aside their differences to come together.

"We've got a lot of work to do here and we've got to get rid of this us and them attitudes," said Montour. "Without the people coming together, there's no future."



*Elected Chief  
William Montour*