

Kanonhstaton house - should it stay or should it go?

By Jim Windle
SIX NATIONS

Call 519-753-4857 to weigh in with your opinion.

We have passed the seventh anniversary of the reclamation of Kanonhstaton and besides the obvious changes since 2006 — like no barricades and no mob scenes on Argyle Street — what has been accomplished?

From a land protectors vantage point, saving the land from being buried under a layer of concrete and tarmac is certainly one accomplishment. Bringing the entire community together on the same side of an issue was also seen as a huge accomplishment, albeit short lived. Through the early days of the reclamation, the Burtch Lands were promised back to Six Nations without going through the land claims process — although that transfer remains an unfulfilled promise as of today.

To others, until the Burtch and Kanonhstaton lands are officially returned to Six Nations, the “occupation” should continue with the presence of Eugene Jonathan and John Garlow in the only remaining house on the site. Until last year, “Wack” a character most people at Six Nations know, was the lone inhabitant long before Eugene arrived. “Wack” has since left the site. Others have come and gone as well on short stay overs, but the house has been continually occupied since April 20, 2006 following the failed OPP raid.

Still others are now saying that maybe it’s time to tear the former H.Q. down and begin planning for some kind of usage program for that land, even before the true title to the land is

officially recognized by the provincial and the federal Canadian governments.

This land has since been registered through the HDI land registry but remains under a valid land claim which has never been dealt with.

Since the Hennings stripped away all the top soil before the reclamation began, growing crops on it is something that can not happen for several years while the earth heals itself.

There are many variation, but these seem to be the main courses of action which have been suggested over the past few years of relative peace at Kanonhstaton.

What was once the centre of attention across Turtle Island and even into Europe, is today a very different place than it was in 2006. The mood is also quite different on both sides of the former barricades.

The community support of those staying at the house in the form of food donations and moral support has petered out to a mere dribble. The only time Six Nations people even come to the site any more is when there is a mini-crisis created when Caledonia’s CANACE group come to stir up trouble. But even that stopped several months ago.

An HDI plan for the clean up and revegetation of the site was approved by the Confederacy Chiefs and budgeted for, although that work has not begun.

The Province, which bought the land from the Henning brothers who were about to build a large subdivision on land under registered and recognized land claim, remains silent on the issue, and the federal government has sidestepped the entire negotiation process, which means there is still no resolution in seven years and not even a step in that direction in the past four.

Out of sight, out of mind, Kanonhstaton has become the

elephant in the room that no one wants to talk about.

But one of the occupants of Kanonhstaton, Eugene Jonathan believes its time to begin talking about the removal the house from the land, even if it sits as an empty field.

John Garlow, the other occupant, does not agree. As a result Jonathan is in the midst of making plans to get out.

Jonathan cites structural damage to the front of the house caused by an attempted suicide by a young Caledonia man two years ago, compromising the structural integrity of the home as one of his reasons, but it is not his only concern.

In general terms he is disillusioned with some of the things he has seen while living at Kanonhstaton. He believes these activities on the land Six Nations people literally put their life on the line for, are disrespectful to the Great Peace and the people of Six Nations.

But Garlow sees things quite differently.

“For now, I think it should stay here,” says Garlow. “It should still be occupied. Canada has not fully accepted that it is our land and someone should be here until they do accept it, even if it is through their system. It’s kind of like a monument.”

He fears that in time without Six Nations presence on the site, someone would try and build something there again.

“I see that as very possible, thinking that we forgot or something. Because Ontario bought it, they would think it’s theirs to do whatever they want on it.”

How do you weigh in on the matter? Should the Kanonhstaton land be vacated and the house removed? Answer stay or go with a brief explanation by calling 519-753-4857 any time or write your e-mail response to teka@tekanews.com. You do not have to leave your name, but please, only one response per caller.