

Mohawks bring Deskahe's message to Ottawa and the world

By Jim Windle
KANATA VILLAGE

Details of Monday's Mohawk Workers meetings in Ottawa with Liberal Aboriginal Affairs Critic Dr. Caroline Bennett and Swiss Ambassador Ulrich Lehner are to be shared Wednesday night at Kanata Village in Eagles Nest (Brantford) beginning at 7:30 P.M. All interested parties are welcome.

Armed with pages of historical documents the delegation representing the Mohawk Workers was in Ottawa on Monday for a one on one meeting with MP and Liberal Aboriginal Affairs Critic Dr. Caroline Bennett at Centre Block of the Parliament Buildings to discuss the longstanding historical complaints of the Mohawk Nation against Canada, the Province of Ontario, and the City of Brantford.

There was a second meeting later in the day with Ulrich Lehner, Ambassador for Switzerland, and his staff to discuss the same issues but at an international level.

Switzerland enjoys close political and economic ties with a large number of countries around the world and is a member of various international organizations.

The goals of Swiss foreign policy are: Peaceful co-existence of people of all nations; promotion of and respect for human rights; environmental sustainability; representing the interests of Swiss businesses abroad; and com-

bating need and poverty in the world.

Upon arrival on Parliament Hill, Minister Bennett was presented with a sweetgrass rose crafted by a member of the Mohawk Workers organization which was greatly appreciated, according to Bill Squire, delegated spokesperson for the Mohawk Workers.

The Mohawk delegation also consisted of Jason Bowman, special assistant to Bill Squire and the Kanyengehkah of the Grand River, Ellis Hill and Frank Smith.

The delegation was in Ottawa on the authority of Principal Mohawk Chief Edwin (Ted) Squire-Hill of the Wolf Clan, who carries the horns and title of Ohrekekó:wa

and who has been recognized as such by the Crown of England on several occasions over the past 35 years.

"During the meeting, Dr. Bennett expressed genuine concern for the situation, and revealed her passion for these issues," according to a media release drafted upon the return of the delegation to the Kanata Village. "She has asked the Mohawk Workers to continue to dialogue with her, and that Justin Trudeau (Federal Liberal Leader) wishes to engage on these issues personally as well."

It was only the first of what promises to be several more in depth meetings with various levels of the Canadian government, the British Crown, United Nations and the the Swiss Ambassador.

"We agreed to continue to

communicate and work together on solutions which can bring people together while at the same time educating on the critical issues," says Squire.

The complaint of the Mohawks covers many of the same issues attempted to be brought under consideration of the world community by Cayuga Chief Levi General in his capacity as Deskaheh in the early 1920's, and the Mohawk delegation of 1945 in San Francisco during the formation of the League of Nations following WW2. In both cases, political sabotage perpetrated by the British Crown, Canada and the United States prevented the evidence and arguments from being presented.

Through Minister Bennett and Ambassador Lehner they hope to finally have their and Deskahe's voices heard.

In these initial meetings the Mohawk delegation covered in broad strokes issues of Human Rights and Aboriginal Rights violations. The delegation also explained known and documented frauds and land and trust funds thefts throughout the past 200 years, right up to today's legislated policies being brought forward by Prime Minister Stephen Harper. It is believed by most First Nations that these policies are designed to cover over historical wrongs and make "legal" Canada's ongoing principals of forced assimilation, resource theft and cultural genocide.

Of immediate concern to the Mohawks is Harper's political assault on Onkwehon:we people across Canada in the form of a dozen Parliamentary Bills intended to derogate and dismantle historical treaties and agreements for the sake of corporate gain and natural resources exploitation. According to Squire, there was genuine concern about that expressed by both Bennett and Ambassador Lehner.

"He (Lehner) had already been made aware of Canada's human rights issues, particularly in respect of Indigenous Peoples - and pointed out that this past comprehensive review of the State of Canada in Geneva did not go well for Canada in his mind," Squire said. "He applauded and supported our efforts with James Anaya the UN Special Rapporteur who met with our delegation in New York on May 20th, which he had not known about. In fact, he sup-

ported this avenue stating that it was

precisely the right way to go in these circumstances."

Bowman and Squire describe the meeting as warm and friendly.

According to their media release, "The Ambassador also appreciated the background material which was provided to him, took considerable interest, and agreed to review it as well as seeking instructions from his superiors in order to determine the level of involvement or assistance which may be offered. We were very thankful for the opportunity to meet with the Ambassador and look forward to remaining in contact."

In June of this year, the Mohawks sent a formal request for clarification on a number of matters to the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General of Canada, including questions regarding the Indian Act's definitions of "band," "council of the band," the term "special reserves," and the Haldimand Deed itself, which they are still awaiting response to.

They also listed for both the Minister and the Ambassador, 10 direct violations of



Mohawk Workers delegation of Ellis Hill, Bill Squire and Frank Smith outside the Governor General's office in Ottawa. (submitted photo)

the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as presented to Anaya.

To be discussed at higher levels as well are matters concerning the City of Brantford's past and present dealings with the Five Nations League of Peace, Six

Nations of the Grand River Confederacy, the Elected Band Council and the Mohawks in particular. They use the case of the Nathan Gage lands, upon which the Brantford Civic Centre and the Casino are built upon as an example of the pattern of fraud and theft.