

Iroquoian Hunting grounds in question

OHSWEKEN -- While discussions continue over traditional Iroquoian hunting grounds with the Ministry of Natural Resources, nine area hunters could be facing charges for hunting without a license.

According to a treaty signed between the Six Nations Confederacy and the British in 1701, an area 800 miles by 400 miles was set aside under the protection of the British for supply forts says Lehman Gibson, a Confederacy representative currently working on the hunting discussions. This area is referred to as the beaver hunting grounds, land traditionally hunted by the Iroquois.

This area, according to the Confederacy, extends from just outside Quebec City down around the Mississippi River to the Florida Isthmus to the eastern seaboard to the St. Lawrence and west to Quebec City. The Confederacy is attempting to explain their position to the Province of Ontario's Ministry of Natural Resources, who "seem receptive" says Gibson. One point the Confederacy would like to make clear is with urbanization and industrialization there has been a loss of hunting grounds and game. They would like compensation in the form of

including all of Ontario in the beaver hunting grounds.

The actual line itself seems open to negotiation, and it should be up to the hunters to govern themselves says Phil Montour of Six Nations Lands Research.

The Confederacy wants to include all of Ontario in the beaver hunting grounds to ensure no one area is over-taxed or becomes depleted of game. Gibson stressed hunting is a social aspect of Iroquoian culture and should be seen as such. He said the lines of communication are open and things look good for further discussion.

A group of hunters from Six Nations had gone up north near the Matachewan Reserve a couple of weeks ago and were hunting moose. They were stopped by a local game warden and were told at that time they were to be charged, but as of Tuesday no charges had been laid. The group spokesman, Jerry Sandy, says as far as they were concerned, the group was within the beaver hunting grounds.

There is a public meeting scheduled for November 7 on the hunting issue. More information will be forthcoming prior to that date.