

The Tobacco Wars: First of series

Bill C-10 is not about fighting crime, its about destroying ...

By Lynda Powless and Donna Duric, Writers

Word spread quickly through Six Nations.

"Have you heard, the OPP shut down a smoke hut this morning."

Word came shortly after, it wasn't true.

And then came the call "we should shut down the roads."

Panic.

And it's being generated from a federal bill, Bill C10 that the federal government is trying to turn into law.

Bill C-10 claims to be aimed at cracking down on illegal "contraband tobacco" growth but that's not how it's being seen by First Nations.

First Nations believe they are the target of the move.

Hazel Hill is the Haudenosaunee Confederacy Council's planning department

director.

She says Bill C-10 is an attempt to destroy an economy with no legal basis.

"Any of the bills Canada or Ontario have, have no bearing or impact on the Haudenosaunee."

She says its about treaties and Canada is ignoring it.

"We do not have any treaty agreements or relationship with Canada or Ontario. Our treaties are pre-Confederation treaties that require complete and full justification of any treaty infringement through an engagement process."

Hill said it is a blatant attack on Haudenosaunee economies.

"They have a responsibility to uphold the honour of the Crown. This is an attempt to dissolve Haudenosaunee treaty rights and

economies in order for them to gain control of our people. It's more akin to ethnic cleansing or genocide," she said.



HDI director Hazel Hill

She isn't alone.

Audrey Hill is a member of the Turtle Island Trade and Commerce business group that has been working diligently on tax issues affecting Six Nations.

She doesn't mince words when it comes to Bill C-10

"It is an act of terrorism on our people and an activity of economic oppression."

Audrey Hill said it is Canada's attempt to con-



Audrey Hill

trol First Nations.

"We've started to generate an economy and like a pebble in a pond with ripples going outward our community is growing and prospering and Canada doesn't like that."

She said the Six Nations

tobacco industry has generated income for families.

"We have an obligation to feed our families and take care of each other. We are coming from our own Haudenosaunee world view. It's about taking care of each other and ourselves.

"If this industry is to be stopped what is Canada going to do about the hundreds of people that would be unemployed or businesses that would go under."

She said she operates a small tobacco company. "We employ 32 people, each with five people at home, multiply that times all the shops, the impact it would have on other businesses here, restaurants, laundromats, garages and the surrounding communities. We leak \$157 million out of this community every

year that is spent in surrounding communities. It's not even a leak it's a contribution to these surrounding communities to help them keep their businesses going and their families fed."

As a result, she said the Six Nations tobacco industry is benefitting not just Six Nations, but Brantford, Caledonia, Hagersville, Ancaster and Hamilton.

"There is far more of an impact than just our community."

She said the industry growth is a direct result of Six Nations taking care of itself.

"The government never had a hand in helping us to get out of the situation they put us in. One of poverty, abuse, that they created."

She said Bill C-10 coupled

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