

# Reg Hill: he's made millions from

**OHSWEKEN** — While shining shoes on the streets of Buffalo, all eight-year-old Reg Hill could think about was becoming a millionaire.

He never would have guessed cigarettes would one day turn his dreams into reality. They would transform him from a struggling entrepreneur into a cunning businessman, legendary for his ability to outsmart government officials and charm anyone who might stand in his way.

The story of Reg Hill is a classic rags-to-riches tale. It's about a man who had almost nothing until he was about 40, when cigarettes ignited his life. In the last decade he's made millions and become a Canadian legend in the process.

## Left home at 14

Around his home at Six Nations, Reg Hill is automatically associated with cigarettes and gambling. His name prompts feelings of respect and fear, praise and betrayal.

The little boy from Buffalo was no angel. With a heart, spade, diamond and club tattooed on his knuckles and a cigarette in his hand, the 14-year-old quit school and left home. He travelled the prairies with a group of Gypsies, painting barns to earn his keep.

After bouncing around between professions, the 30-year-old Mohawk found himself in Chicago, dead broke. Unemployed and sleeping on

a friend's couch, he was living on one can of soup a day.

Life was grim, and he was convinced he was a failure. He drank a bottle of whisky and swallowed as much Valium as he could find, hoping to drift into eternal oblivion.

Instead, he vomited for four days straight.

He emerged from the experience more determined than ever to make his mark on the world.

He returned to his parents' home at Six Nations, and in the early 1980s, opened his own art gallery in Toronto.

Once again, he had big dreams and no money.

Unable to scrape together \$3,000 for posters to advertise an upcoming show, he approached a cousin for a loan. Instead, the cousin offered him 50 cents on top of his costs for every carton of cheap cigarettes Mr. Hill could find.

Mr. Hill revels in telling how he set up underground cigarette networks across the country, a scheme which earned him millions. Although Canadian officials disagree, he insists it is perfectly legal for natives to transport smokes from province to province without paying tax.

"If I was doing anything illegal I would have been in jail a long time ago."

The money helped him build an empire at Six Nations. He says he no longer has any jets, but he still keeps a collection of motorcycles and boats. He owns about 600 acres of land and a complex known as Tobacco Road, which he estimates is worth about \$500,000.



**Reg Hill turns tiny cracks in tobacco tax laws into gaping chasms of opportunity.**