

Aaron Detlor and the Haudenosaunee Development Institute

By Nahnda Garlow

OHSWEKEN – Robert Aaron Detlor is a Canadian lawyer from Toronto, Ontario who has been representing the Haudenosaunee citizens of Six Nations of the Grand River via the Haudenosaunee Confederacy Chiefs Council (HCCC) and the Haudenosaunee Development Institute (HDI) since 2007.

Detlor was evicted from Six Nations in a community led action Tuesday morning. This follows almost an entire year of accusations and evidence raised by Haudenosaunee citizens at Six Nations, saying Detlor has been misrepresenting their interests.

A Background in Energy Law

Detlor was called to the bar in 1998. He worked with several law firms in the city of Toronto including Power Budd LLP — a boutique energy law firm that, according to a *Lexpert Magazine* article in 2000 boasted its staff of 15 “cherry-picked” specialists in energy law, environmental law, regulated industries and government relations.

Power Budd eventually merged with CMS Cameron McKenna, an international law firm with 15 years of experience in energy law and politics; including consulting with the conservative government to take Ontario’s energy from public to corporate in the Business Corporations Act and consulting for the 1998 Energy Competition Act.

Detlor was one of those specialists on the team filled with vision for all the legal work ahead of them, negotiating for the new energy industry of corporations and municipal ownership — paving the way for the Ontario Power Generation to create an energy marketplace in Ontario.

Detlor’s beginnings at Six Nations

The lawyer, who says he is Mohawk, has been in the public eye at Six Nations since 2006 when he arrived in the community during the Caledonia reclamation.

Sources told the *Two Row Times* Detlor originally arrived on the territory at the negotiating table for the Caledonia reclamation as a driver for another lawyer.

During the process Detlor was routinely asked for his opinion as a bystander to the negotiations and eventually was brought to the table as a participant.

According to documents obtained by the TRT, Detlor publicly confirmed at a meeting in 2009 that he was secured on contract and retained by the HCCC to act as their lawyer.

Multi-million dollar energy deals

HDI held a public meeting last summer and distributed a report that said in 2007 Detlor was appointed along with Ron Thomas and Brian Doolittle to “lay out all the steps necessary to ensure the successful implementation of the institute”.

“The institute’ would later become HDI, and Detlor a key negotiator in writing letters and sharing emails with development corporations — agreeing to their projects on NanFan Treaty lands, also known as the Beaver Hunting Grounds or the Dish with One Spoon territory, in exchange for financial compensation to the Haudenosaunee people.

HDI eventually started reaching out to development corporations and became the administrative vehicle for development corporations to receive the required prior and informed consent of the Haudenosaunee.

Call to dismantle HDI

Last summer a condoled chief of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy followed traditional protocols and stood, supported by his clan mother and two clan families, calling for the immediate dismantlement of the Haudenosaunee Development Institute and dismissal of lawyer Aaron Detlor and HDI Board members Hazel Hill and Brian Doolittle.

This came after Haudenosaunee citizens of Six Nations were informed that Detlor, along with other members of the HDI signed an engagement agreement with Samsung waiving the application of sovereign immunity for the Haudenosaunee people throughout the NanFan Treaty of 1701 — areas the HDI says they represent.

The agreements further stipulated that in exchange for agreeing to the projects, HCCC would ensure

any of its member chiefs or citizens would not oppose the project for its duration and that HDI would not give money to Haudenosaunee people for their loyalty.

Despite having followed proper protocol in his statement, the concerns raised by that Chief and the two clans were ignored by the HDI.

Further to that, Haudenosaunee citizens who raised concerns and asked questions about the deals were misrepresented by HCCC media representatives, who played down the story to be nothing more than a misunderstanding and personal attack. Detlor spoke to Hamilton media about the incident calling it a “kerfuffle”. HCCC Secretary Jock Hill released a statement via Facebook saying that the incident was not recorded in the minutes.

But it did happen. A declaration was read aloud in council by Cayuga Wolf Chief Sam General, calling for the dismantlement of the HDI for not negotiating in good faith on behalf of the Confederacy.

It also clearly called for the immediate dismissal and removal of Detlor, Hill and Doolittle for misrepresenting the Confederacy, immediate halting of all HDI business and the launch of a full investigation into HDI by the Confederacy.

Fully aware that the Cayuga Wolf and Cayuga Snipe clans were calling for HDI

to stop representing their interests — the HDI, Detlor, Hill and Doolittle continued to operate without a consensus in the Confederacy.

Detlor defended himself and the actions of HDI regarding the Samsung Agreements at last May’s Confederacy Council, claiming the sovereign immunity they waived was only applicable in the United States.

“It’s a specific legal concept from the United States,” Detlor told the Confederacy.

Detlor told the Council the lawyers who drafted the Samsung agreements were American and that despite initial concerns raised by the chiefs who HDI consulted with that it was decided the Agreements would be accepted with that clause remaining.

However, members nations of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy dwell on both sides of the Canada-US border. The NanFan Treaty area HDI was laying claim to also extends into the US.

2438543 Ontario Inc.

Additional red flags were raised by Haudenosaunee citizens at Six Nations after it was discovered the HCCC and HDI had created a corporation in the fall of 2014 that was used to purchase land in Brant County, just outside of the reserve borders.

Copies of the land transfer given to TRT did not name HDI, but an online search through the Minis-

try of Government Services listed ‘2438543 Ontario Inc.’ as a “Corporation under the jurisdiction of Ontario”. HDI Director Hazel Hill is noted as the Director of the Corporation, which was launched in October of 2014, and identifies Hill as a Canadian resident.

Additional research confirmed that on May 27, 2015 a change was submitted to the corporate structure: adding Aaron Detlor as Secretary and Brian Doolittle as President. Both men are also at the core of HDI and are listed on the document as Canadian residents.

Members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and it’s citizens were unaware they were share-holders to a corporation, were not informed of its inception and were not privy to finances involved with the land purchase.

Overcharging clients

Other reports of questionable actions Detlor and members of the HDI have taken since last summer prompted an urgency to take action to remove Detlor from the community.

Reports were sent to Haudenosaunee citizens at Six Nations from concerned members at the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek First Nation (AAFN), formerly known as Whitefish Lake First Nation. Detlor represented that community and was investigated for overcharging the community.

The band council launched a third party investigation which confirmed Detlor was simultaneously charging four Ontario First Nations for hours he worked. One of those communities was Six Nations.

New reports

Recent court transcripts brought to the *Two Row Times* also show Detlor becoming involved in personal legal matters of the citizens at Six Nations, including assisting Haudenosaunee citizens to fight one another in provincial courtrooms.

According to the Great Law of Peace, weapons of war against one another are to be buried. Maintaining the peace at all costs is central to the Confederacy itself and Haudenosaunee children are taught this is something the Haudenosaunee people should not participate in.

However transcripts show Detlor representing one Haudenosaunee person against another in the courtroom, bringing the Ganohonyo’k into those proceedings, and using it in the courtroom to help two community members fight in a court of law under a foreign jurisdiction.

This is part of the big picture that prompted a community led action Tuesday to remove the lawyer from his office in Ohsweken.

What happens next has yet to be seen.