

# Members of the Oneida Nation of the Thames oppose joint council

By Nahnda Garlow

**ONEIDA** – A letter sent to the *Two Row Times* clearly articulates that members of the Oneida Nations of the Thames are not in support of a proposed joint council between the traditional Haudenosaunee government and the Oneida band council.

The letter says a political divide in the community stem from a land deal from 2002 signing over 6.4 acres from the Lottie Nicholas Estate to Howard Elijah and Bob Antone for “\$1.00 dollar along with love and compassion.”

The Haudenosaunee clan families at Oneida holding the titles of Teyohakw<sup>^</sup>t, Thanahak<sup>^</sup>tha and Howatsat<sup>^</sup>tha sent the statement — saying that a divide amongst traditional people in the community started when Elijah and Antone took that land and petitioned the band council for funds to build another longhouse.

According to the letter, Haudenosaunee clan families at Oneida did not come to an agreement on approaching band council for funding because the acquisition of the land did not come through council first.

“On February 17, 2004 the Chiefs council put out an official written statement that stated their position and it was put out to the people of Onei-

da. This document was signed by condoled titleholders in three different title families. The first title family Otatsehte was signed by condoled titleholders Foster T Elijah and Sadie Summers. The second title family, Shonusus was signed by condoled titleholder Dolly Doxtator and the third title family, Howats<sup>^</sup>tha was signed by condoled titleholders Rosalie Doxtator and Belanger Brown. These families made it very clear that there has never been a Chief’s Council meeting to consent to a land deal between the Chief’s Counsel and Nicholas Deleary.”

The clan families write that funding in spite of not having a consensus, Elijah and Antone pushed ahead with the new longhouse project — securing money from the band council in February of 2003.

The clan families also had issue with jurisdictional matters of accepting money from the band council to construct the new longhouse. Contracts shown to the *Two Row Times* stated the agreements “are to be governed according to the laws of the province of Ontario and the laws of Canada.”

Sources from Oneida say this was something the clan families could not accept and that these and several more actions are at the root of the di-

vide between longhouses in Oneida.

The letter from the three clan families of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy states, “We would also like to make it very clear and strongly state that we the Ongwehonwe under the Kaianerekowa within the K<sup>^</sup>nthyokwanhasta of the Old Longhouse on Elijah Road, are NOT working with band administration on this new joint initiative or this new governance draft, as it does not fit in ours our circle and goes against the principles of the Kaianerekowa. We will NEVER take part or agree to either of these two initiatives. Furthermore, there is more than just the Bear Clan present in our house and the signatures at the end of this letter will confirm this.”

The letter was signed by three traditional clan titleholders and dated April 3, 2016. It ends, “We would also like to express that we do not want to argue or fight with our people, but we do want to make things right in accordance with our original teachings under the Kaianerekowa and within the K<sup>^</sup>nthyokwanhasta. We hope that this letter has greatly reduce the confusion and misinformation being put out there in regards to longhouses and what people are working with who in Oneida.”