

Bellegarde "Canada is Indian land, this my truth of our peoples"

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elected he told us he would go and kick down the doors in Ottawa so we can get in." But he said, "That didn't happen so clearly their function as a national organization has been lost. Their job is to open the doors and give us access to the leaders so we can present our case and that hasn't happened in some time so we are hoping with this election that will change. I think it will. Perry is used to working at the grassroots level."

He said the election has already lifted spirits among chiefs. "The atmosphere in assembly, and the chatter going around is lighter. Everyone seems to be happy with the outcome."

Six Nations Band Council did not support Bellegarde either.

But Elected Chief Ava Hill says she looks forward to working with him.

"The Six Nations Elected Council would like to congratulate National Chief Perry Bellegarde and look forward to seeing him put his election platform into action," Hill said in an email. "In his acceptance speech, National Chief Bellegarde stated '...it's time to close the circle...' and get back to important business. There are many issues that the First Nations across Turtle Island require the Assembly of First Nations to advocate for the betterment of our nations and communities. Six Nations looks forward to doing this important work with national chief Bellegarde."

Six Nations had supported Quebec's Ghislain Picard, citing his 22 years of experience as regional chief of Quebec and Labrador. Elected Chief Hill and Councillors Darryl Hill and Terry General attended the meeting.

Bellegarde is the first chief elected for a three and a half year term as a result of Atleo's sudden departure. The normal term is three years.



Chief Bryan LaForme

In his acceptance speech, Bellegarde criticized Canada's treatment of First Nations people and vowed to "fight for the teachings that unite us all."

"To the people of Canada, I say to you, the values of fairness and tolerance which Canada exports to the world is a lie when it comes to our people.

"Today, we renew the sacred,

vows of our ancestors to protect the land, and protect our women, children and communities."

Bellegarde said he will work to ensure First Nations get a share of Canada's resource wealth.

"To Canada, we say, for too long we have been dispossessed of our homelands and the wealth of our rightful in-

heritance. Canada will no longer develop pipelines, transmission lines, or any infrastructure on our lands as business as usual."

He said First Nations people will oppose "any development which deprives our children of the legacy of our ancestors. We will no longer accept poverty and homelessness while resource com-

panies and governments grow fat off our lands."

Bellegarde said resource development can only go forward if First Nations get their share of royalties, ownership of the resources and jobs for the people."

He closed with, "Canada is Indian land. This is my truth. This is the truth of our peoples."