

Confederacy chiefs not supporting coming Great Law recital

By Donna Duric
Writer

Confederacy Chiefs have decided not to support the upcoming Great Law Recital because organizers did not follow Confederacy protocol by coming to them first before planning the huge event.

Chiefs made the decision at Saturday's Confederacy council meeting after hearing members of the Six Nations Men's Fire say they had tried to follow protocol as best they knew.

The recital is going forward as planned despite the lack of support from the Confederacy.

Confederacy Chiefs told the men they lacked "respect" by not coming to the Confederacy before planning the recital.

"We can't officially support your event," Mohawk Chief Howard Thompson

told the men after Chiefs discussed the issue for a large part of the day's meeting.

"The organizers went all over the place to other communities, invited other nations and yet they didn't have respect to come to the council first or talk to the Clanmothers and Chiefs first," says Confederacy supporter Hazel Hill, who attended Saturday's meeting.

Thousands of people from nations across North America are expected to attend the 10-day recital here from Aug. 10-19.

One of the event's organizers, Chris Sandy (Jagwedeth) told Chiefs he and the Men's Fire were trying the best they could to unify the people. He said they have been travelling across North America since February inviting people from

many nations, including the Seminole, Navajo, Peruvian, Algonquin, Miqmaq and numerous Haudenosaunee nations, to the event.

He asked that Chiefs and Clanmothers accept his apologies.

"I thought it was sanctioned," he said. "We're only human beings. We are here to learn how to unify. All we're doing is trying to unite the people. It's been a long time coming."

Jagwedeth had said it's been at least five to 10 years since a Great Law Recital has been held on Six Nations, yet Chiefs told him one had just been held a week prior to Saturday's Confederacy meeting.

"Every year we do that," said Onondaga Chief Pete Skye. "We've been doing that for many years. How many of you come to

that?" Cayuga Sub-Chief and Confederacy Secretary Leroy "Jock" Hill told Chiefs he has been receiving a lot of calls from people from many different territories asking if the event was legitimate.

"It seems there is a lot of interest in it," said Hill. "I think every territory has contacted our office but they want to know if it's legitimate and I don't know what to tell them."

He said he received a call from the Onondaga Council saying a poster had circulated there stating that the event was sanctioned by Confederacy Chiefs. Hill said he told them, "I don't recall it being sanctioned."

Jagwedeth's clanmother also said that he did not come to her to discuss his intentions of holding the event beforehand and

Seneca Longhouse faithkeepers asked that certain ceremonies not be performed, namely the Feather Dance.

"They view it as misrepresenting something sacred," said Hill.

Jagwedeth presented a wampum to Confederacy Chief Allen MacNaughton in his quest for his apology to be accepted, but Clanmothers told him to take it back, saying it was not the proper time or place to present the wampum.

Jagwedeth and Men's Fire member Joe Sharrow did not want to speak about the outcome of the meeting.

Hazel Hill said the Confederacy agreed a few years ago that this event should be done, but Hill said Jagwedeth did not come back to council in time to ask speakers to prepare and for

the longhouses to be prepared.

"Basically, the council reminded them that the reason they couldn't sanction it is because they didn't follow protocol and that how are our children and future suppose to learn to do things the proper way if we just go ahead and let people do what they want?" said Hill. "There is a right way of doing things and then there is what these guys done; you might call the easy way or just doing something in spite of knowing there is protocol."

She said organizers were treating the event "more as a social event."

Organizers have already received \$70,000 in funding from band council to buy food for the event, which is set to take place at the Gaylord Powless Arena and Community Hall.