

Bureau of Indian Affairs supports Bowen in Seneca Nation dispute

by Paul Barnsley

CATTARAUGUS - The Bureau of Indian Affairs has decided it will do business with President Dennis J. Bowen.

The decision announced Monday by Franklin Keel, the acting Area Director of the BIA's Eastern Area, said the impeachment process used to oust Bowen from office by the Seneca Party was "rife with error."

"Accordingly, the appointment of Karen Bucktooth (the Seneca Party's President) is a nullity, and she should resume her position as councillor of the Nation. The councillor appointed to fill Ms. Bucktooth's position must step down. All business conducted by the council after the attempted removal of President Bowen is constitutionally void," Keel's decision reads.

The U.S. Self Determination Act allows the BIA to receive assurances that the officials who say they act for the Nation are indeed the legitimate leaders. Under that act the BIA claimed the right to state the conditions under which it will enter into agreements with the Seneca Nation. In order for the Seneca Nation to deal with the federal government they will have to satisfy those conditions. The government wants the Council

members to recognize Bowen as the President or resign and they want Karen Bucktooth to step down.

The 2 sides met with mediators from the Justice Department on Monday morning. Four members of each of the sides who are not councillors met with the mediators to work towards solv-

ing the dispute which has divided the community and resulted in the death of 3 people.

"It might be the people are working this out," said Rose Patterson, a councillor with Bowen's faction.

The 8 person panel worked out an agreement that was to see the two armed camps emp-

tied of guns and closed after 5:00 PM, Tuesday. The 2 sides have each occupied a building on the reservation. The 2 buildings have been manned 24 hours a day by armed guards since Bowen was impeached in late January.

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