

Mohawks ask for financial help in legal fight

by Paul Barnsley

SIX NATIONS - The 8 Mohawks who are challenging the right of Canadian courts to exert authority over the Mohawk Nation say they have already spent \$250,000 in legal fees and will need financial help to continue the fight.

An account - named the Two Row Trust Account - has been opened at the Ohsweken Royal Bank so that supporters can make donations. A press release prepared for the 8 people facing charges in Provincial Court says they are \$160,000 in arrears in legal fees and will need as much as another \$400,000 before they are done.

The accused Mohawks have combined their defense and challenged the Crown's right to prosecute them.

Hazel Hill, Dick Hill, Dave Johns and Larry Green of Six Nations, Lillie Lefort and David R Maracle of Tyendinaga, and Lanette Square and Glen Jock of Akwesasne face charges under the Criminal Code, Excise Act and/or the Customs Act. The charges were laid in 1993 or 94.

"We are not trying to get off the hook," Dick Hill said. "If I had just pled guilty to the charges against me and plea bargained, the most I would have been fined would have been \$8,000. We've already spent \$250,000 in legal fees trying to show that we are not Canadian citizens and not

answerable to their courts."

Hill emphasized that the need for contributions is urgent. The case is scheduled to resume in Brantford Provincial Court on March 20th. Hill said that anyone who values the independence and sovereignty of the Mohawk Nation or who will benefit financially should they win should support them.

"A million dollars in legal fees is not a humungous figure at all if we end up getting the respect and recognition we deserve," Hill added.

Throughout the lengthy, detailed press release that contained the announcement of the trust account and the plea for support, there was reference only to the Mohawk nation. Onondaga Confederacy Council Chief Arnie General is concerned about that. "The chiefs agree we have put a division there ourselves. They feel we should stick together," he said.

Chief General, offering his personal views and not speaking on behalf of council, said this group of Mohawks are working separately from the Confederacy Council. He also said the council was still discussing the fact that some Mohawks have distanced themselves from the council. He said the Two Row Wampum treaty is between the Iroquoian people and the Crown. If the

Mohawks set themselves up as a third, separate entity, he said, "That's also in violation of the Two Row."

"Some Mohawks haven't broken away from the Confederacy. It's not all lost yet," he said. "We have to come to an understanding and become unified."

The Onondaga Chief agreed with the principle behind the Mohawks' legal action. "I'm not a Canadian citizen. I live in a land that is totally ours," he said, adding, "I don't think they're gonna win because they're taking it to their ballpark - the white man's court."

General felt the name of the trust account was disrespectful. "Calling it the Two Row Trust Fund turns it into a money making process."

He said the Mohawk Nation was doing some good. "I have to give them credit for standing up and doing something."

General expressed some doubt about claims made by the Mohawk Nation that a victory vanquishing Canadian law from Six Nations would not lead to lawlessness.

"Our law is already here. The Great Law. All we have to do is enforce it. The Peacemaker wants us to live in harmony. That's why he did away with the Warrior Society. All this materialism is what started the chaos."