

Confusion Over SRMT Constitution

Is the Constitution Valid or Is the St. Regis Tribal Council Legal or Not Legal? That is the question to be answered at the election polls on June 1, 1996. According to Tribal member Larry Thompson, at the monthly Tribal Council meeting held on April 13, 1996 the Tribal Constitution did not receive the necessary amount of votes to be valid. Mr. Thompson contends that the Constitution did not receive 51% of the vote on June 4, 1995.

Mr. Thompson addressed the Legislative Council on and read a petition which had 778 signatures. The petition requests a revote on the Constitution because the required number of votes was not achieved. The Tribal Clerk, Carol Heme, verified that a petition had been submitted on Friday, April 12 and she had 702 names on the petition as valid and 49 invalid names. With this number, the petition has the required 20% of signature to initiate a revote. The Tribal Clerk reported that 288 more names had been turned in this morning, April 13th at 10:25. The Tribal Clerk explained that she did not have the opportunity to review the new names. The Legislative Council agreed that the petition superseded any recommendation by the Council. The referendum vote would happen on June 1st as per the petition. There were many questions from the people in attendance. The questions thrown at Mr. Thompson were: why now and do you want changes to the Constitution. Mr. Thompson said he believed the vote was not valid. 51% was not achieved. He did not want amendments to the Constitution, he did not want changes in the Constitution. Some of the people who worked on the Constitution were visibly upset over the petition and were quite blunt in their defense of the document. According to the Constitution Committee members they wanted to work on the issues of concern and not go to a revote but Mr. Thompson held fast to his concern over the validity of the vote.

Earlier in the executive portion of the Tribal meeting, the election board members, Ricky Terrance, Melvin White and Alma Ransom, gave an update on the election rules and regulations. The election board has submitted their final document and were awaiting the legislative council's approval or disapproval. Then Mr. White told

approval on their document because Henry Flood had also submitted his election rules and regulations document. The legislative council does not know which to approve. Henry Flood's document indicates that the election board document has some inconsistencies with the Constitution thereby making some of the election rules and regulations unconstitutional.

Mr. Melvin White recommended that the election criteria of previous years be followed. There is not sufficient time for the new election rules and regulations to be passed and in place by June 1, 1996. The people were upset with the latest news about two documents and with Henry Flood's continued presence in Tribal Council business. The local board members had received input from the community and their document (98% of it) was based on this input. The question was, where did Henry Flood get his input? The local board members had changed the criteria for those wanting to run for office. The nominee must be a resident of Ahkwesasne for 6 months. Henry Flood's copy does not have this rule. Very basic differences which are causing problems for the people and the Legislative council.

The discussion ended with the Legislative Council stating there would be a referendum vote on the Constitution. The election board will be reviewing the petition preamble to formulate the referendum question. The people were confused about the laws that had been passed in the last 10 months and the validity of the judge's position. Are the laws legal; is there a Legislative and Executive Council and what about the appointed judge? No one had an answer but as an elder said, "we don't need anarchy." The people asked what happens if the Constitution does not receive 51% of the yes votes. Is the three Tribal Chief system back? and what positions will be vacant for the elections? Serious questions which were not answered by the CEO or the legislative Council. "The community was not supportive of the Constitution, at least not 51%, and the total community did not get involved in the Constitution." This statement was made by a young Mohawk. There was no response to his statement, except for the comment that a vote would take place.

By Kawehnihe

Tribal Council General Fund In Deficit

Ahkwasasne: According to Leigh Oakes, St. Regis Tribal Council business administrator, the Tribal Council General Fund is in deficit for fiscal year 1995 in the amount of \$457,060.00. She gave her financial presentation at the regular monthly tribal meeting on April 13, 1996. Well over 100 people listened to Ms. Oakes explain the revenues and expenditures for '95. Ms. Oakes told those in attendance that the audit report would be completed within the next couple of weeks.

Under revenues, the tribal general fund received \$1,099,234.00 for 1995. This was the largest amount received in the revenue column. Billy's Bingo Hall transferred in \$207,220.00. The issue at this point was where is the revenue from the Bingo Palace and the reply was that the Bingo Palace has just begun to pay the bills they have incurred since the take over with no funds to transfer into the tribal general fund.

The expenditures include wages for the Chief Executive Officer, Tribal Clerk and the Judge. The amount of \$626,834.00. The chiefs have not been receiving a salary for several months, Why? There is a deficit. The next large expenditure is for consultants and professional fees. Legal fees and consultants such as Henry Flood and Plattsburgh Air Force Base are included in these items. The community is concerned about the amount of

money expended for lawyers and consultants.

The community want cut backs and Ms. Oakes is presently meeting with the Legislative Council to pare down the budget. Ms. Oakes has also prepared a budget for the Tribal Council and has highly recommended that a budget be put in place. The budget has not been passed yet. Discussions between Ms. Oakes and the Legislative Council have taken place and will continue until some of her recommendations have been accepted. The people encouraged the meetings to continue and urged the Council to reduce costs. Another area questioned was equipment, but according to an employee equipment is needed (repaired or purchased) for the waterline to continue functioning.

The tribal general fund is carrying the waterline program. The waterline has been a deficit program for several years. The water line program is considering raising rates but what has to happen is for the homeowners to pay their water bills.

The people had many questions and Ms. Oakes answered with what she knew of each area. Ms. Oakes is new as the administrator and told the people that she would get the answers for them for the next meeting. Her office is open for the community to come in and get the information they are looking for.

READERS: Please note the deadline for submissions is WEDNESDAY at NOON sharp. Many Thanks!

Local Student Earns Academic Honors at Northfield Mount Hermon School

NORTHFIELD, Mass. — Academic honors for the winter term at Northfield Mount Hermon School have been awarded to Stacey Mitchell, a sophomore and the daughter of Kathleen and Raymond Mitchell, Hogansburg, N.Y.

She has been a member of the varsity volleyball team, winners of the 1995 Fall Invitational Tournament, the New England championship. She has also been a member of the junior-varsity lacrosse and ice hockey teams and of the NMH American Indian Student Association.

At Northfield Mount Hermon, an independent, coeducational, college-preparatory school, honors students must have a term average of at least B, with no grade below B minus. They must also demonstrate good citizenship and complete physical-education and Work Program requirements.

