

Officials Write Letters on Land Claims

Gov. George Pataki, U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer, D-NY, and U.S. Rep. Sherwood Boehlert, R-New Hartford, each wrote letters to federal officials in the wake of the April 4 collapse of Oneida Indian Nation land-claim mediation talks. Below, is the text sent by Pataki.

Pataki letter to President Clinton:

Dear Mr. President:

Since 1970, the Oneida Indian Nation of New York and its successors in interest have filed several land claim actions against the people of the State of New York.

These legal actions seek to eject thousands of private citizens from their homes, take hundreds of millions of dollars from the taxpayers of this State, and gain title to more than 270,000 acres of land in the heart of central New York State.

The basis for these legal actions is a series of land transactions or "treaties" between the Oneida Indian Nation and the State of New York in the late 18th and early 19th Centuries. The Oneida Indian Nation entered into each of these treaties with the full knowledge of the United States federal government. Now, some 200 years after the fact, the Oneidas are asking a federal court to overturn these treaties and evict thousands of hard working, law abiding and taxpaying United States citizens from their homes.

Shockingly, and adding greatly to this problem, on December 8, 1998, the federal government intervened in these legal actions as plaintiff, on the side of the Oneida Indians and against the innocent non-Indian citizens of central New York. These Indian land claims are having real and severe impact on the emotional and economic well being of the citizens who live within the areas being claimed. This action by your Department of Justice is, I believe, simply wrong.

As a matter of principle, it is inappropriate that the federal courts are even entertaining claims based upon land transactions which occurred with the full knowledge of the federal government more than 200 years ago. That your Department of Justice is actually a plaintiff in this action is unacceptable.

When I took office in January of 1995, I made the settlement of the Indian land claims a priority for my Administration. Since that time, my office has spent countless hours in negotiations and mediations, working to find a fair and reasonable resolution of these claims. To date, all of these efforts have been foiled by the unfair demands of the Oneida Indian Nation.

Funded by limitless gaming dollars and emboldened by your administration's unconditional support, the Oneida Indian Nation has thwarted all attempts to reach a reasonable settlement, apparently preferring to maintain the status quo. In this case, the "status quo" consists of the Indian Nation holding the residents of central New York hostage under clouded real estate titles and evades all State and federal environmental and land use regulations, and wages a war of unfair business competition against the law abiding, tax paying business owners in central New York.

After languishing on the federal court's docket for nearly 30 years, the Federal District Court for the Northern District of New York recognized the need to put an end to the social and economic tolls these claims are exacting upon the citizens of central New York. In 1999, the Court appointed a federal mediator to make a final effort to settle this land claim before it goes to litigation. Despite more than a year of work and frequent and intensive mediation sessions, the federal mediator was forced to declare a final impasse on Tuesday, April 4, 2000.

The mediator was forced to end the mediation because he was unable to get the New York Oneida Indian Nation to (1) delink unrelated gaming issues from the land claim negotiation; and (2) agree to a reasonable cap on the number of acres that would ultimately constitute the Nation's reservation in New York.

That the mediator failed to achieve a fair and reasonable resolution of this ancient claim is regrettable. That the New York Oneida Indian Nation failed to negotiate in good faith is wrong. That your administration has undertaken to sue the innocent citizens of upstate New York for

the federal government's misfeasance is simply unconscionable.

The people of central New York have suffered long enough under the threats posed by the Oneida Indian Nation's land claims. The State of New York has done all that is within its power to achieve a fair and reasonable resolution of this longstanding conflict. Now it is time for your administration to cease and desist from taking further action against the citizens of central New York.

I respectfully call upon you to direct your Department of Justice to withdraw from the Oneida Indian land claims as a plaintiff, and to abandon this unfair attempt to rewrite the long history of the federal government's mishandling of Indian affairs. If the federal government has failed to live up to its fiduciary duty to protect the interests of the Oneida Indian Nation, then it should acknowledge that failure. It should not, however, seek to settle this historic account at the expense of the innocent non-Indian American citizens who reside in central New York.

The Oneida Indian Nation has been given every opportunity to achieve a fair and reasonable settlement of its land claims. It has turned its back on those opportunities. Now the obligation rests with your Department of Justice to withdraw from this lawsuit. The Oneida Indian Nation should not be rewarded for its unreasonableness, any more than the innocent citizens of central New York should be punished with endless litigation for an alleged wrong in which no one alive today had any role, nor means to avoid.

I respectfully urge you to exercise the leadership and responsibility which your Department of Justice has failed to bring to these proceedings. The federal government must stop its efforts to penalize the people of central New York. The historical sins of the federal government should not now be visited upon its innocent citizens who reside in upstate New York. Mr. President, I urge you to direct your Department of Justice to end this litigation immediately. Very truly yours,
George E. Pataki

Mural Started at Kanatakon School

The future of Akwesasne's artistic community is growing every day. The latest are a pair of students from the Kanatakon School. Ron Swamp and Louis David, both in 8th grade have begun work on a wall painting. In their words represents the great spirit over the earth. The idea came from a puzzle one of the boys was putting together.

The painting which will adorn the wall of the Mohawk room of Kanatakon School where the idea was born.

Teacher Ron Lafrance Jr. stated: "I noticed these young men were always drawing on everything, and they are good at what they do, so I thought up with a way they could show their talent. This mural could also be an encouragement to other students to pursue their individual gift and learn to express themselves with it."

Both young men are very serious about their gift and wish to pursue it with all their heart.

The future is limitless and some of their hard work may be on your wall one day.

- Photo and story by:
Bill H. Reidy



Louis David and Ron Swamp

WOLFGLAN RESTAURANT

Akwesasne East
State Road-Route 37
Telephone(518) 358-2201


Extensive Menu - Great Variety!!

Walleye, Haddock, Perch
Charbroiled Steaks
Breakfast-Lunch-Dinner

Open 7 days a week
Mon - Breakfast and Lunch Only
Tues - Sun 6:30am - 8:00pm

Daily Lunch
Specials

Wednesdays: Canadian Money 25%



**DISCOUNT
CARPET
SALES**

938-0735

421 Fourth St. West
Cornwall, Ont.
K6H 2S7

Art Buchanan