

Wulustuk Times

Wulustuk - Indigenous name for St John River

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Shawn Atleo

After a marathon voting process, Shawn Atleo is the new national chief of Canada's Assembly of First Nations, succeeding Phil Fontaine who declined to seek a fourth term.

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Wulustuk Times:

Each month we gather and publish the latest, most current and relevant native information for our readers. Proceeding with this concept, we feel that a well informed person is better able to see, relate with, and assess a situation more accurately when equipped with the right tools. Our aim is to provide the precise tools and the best information possible.

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ATLEO ELECTED NEW AFN CHIEF

Katherine O'Neill

Calgary - Shawn Atleo has been elected as the new national chief of the Assembly of First Nations after an eighth ballot.

His rival, Perry Bellegarde, the former leader of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, conceded.

The race had stretched well into a second day today. Mr. Atleo, the AFN's British Columbia vice-chief, widened his lead after the seventh round of voting. The number of delegates voting had slowly dwindled with each round. Candidates required a 60 per cent majority to be declared the new chief.

The men were battling to succeed Phil Fontaine, who served as national chief on and off since 1997 and declined to seek a fourth term.

Mr. Atleo was seen as the education candidate, pressing the importance of languages, history, teachings and cultural values, while Mr. Bellegarde emphasized economic development, such as securing resource benefits and pressing Ottawa to remove a cap on increases in aboriginal funding. Both were seen as front-runners in the five-person race.

Mr. Atleo immediately said Thursday he would press the federal government to back up its apology over residential schools with more help for native people. He also talked about the importance of treaty rights and the government's obligation to fulfill agreements it signed decades ago. The new grand chief also signalled he would like to focus on aboriginal youth. He said too many are in care, too many are unemployed and not enough are getting a proper education.

"There is work to do," Mr. Atleo told the assembly.

"It is our time as indigenous people in this country to take our rightful place. It's our time to see the treaties implemented. It's our time to see the young ones supported. It's our time to make sure that the murdered, missing women that we call for a public inquiry."

While the assembly represents more than 800,000 natives across Canada, only the 639 first nation chiefs or their proxies were eligible to vote in the election held in Calgary. Of those, 553 registered to vote in the election.

After the first votes were cast, Mr. Atleo was the easy front runner. Two candidates were eliminated and a third dropped out. Many of those men's supporters turned to Mr. Bellegarde.

Shortly after the fifth ballot, Mr. Atleo and Mr. Bellegarde met privately for about five minutes. They emerged from the closed-door meeting smiling and claiming no deal had been struck and the election would continue. They were surrounded by their supporters. Each side was telling their candidate not to cut a deal or give up.

Mr. Atleo, a hereditary chief of Ahousaht First Nation, a small Vancouver Island band, was the contest's youngest candidate at 42. His supporters claimed he represented an important and needed generational change in leadership for the non-profit AFN. About half of First Nations Canadians are 25 years old or younger.

The married father of two has a master's degree in education and is chancellor of Vancouver Island University. He also pledged to focus on economic issues.

"We know economic independence is political independence. Economic power is political power," he told assembly delegates Tuesday.

Mr. Bellegarde, 46, was born and raised in Saskatchewan's Little Black Bear First Nation and holds a bachelor's degree in business administration. He said he would push to improve the economic situation for native people in Canada, including securing resource rights and push for more money from Ottawa.

"We need to close the socioeconomic gap between First Nations and non-First Nations people. It's huge," he said.

After the first ballot, the third-place candidate, Ontario's John Beaucage, earned 15 per cent of the votes, but withdrew and threw his support behind Mr. Bellegarde. Two other candidates – Terry Nelson and Bill Wilson – missed the second ballot.

It set up a tense battle, and on the two ensuing ballots the men tied. Both are young, well-spoken leaders looking to revitalize the AFN. Both have served as a vice-chief for the organization under Mr. Fontaine.

The close race kept observers and voters on their toes at the Calgary convention.

"I think there was a lot of uncertainty about the outcome of this particular election, and the reason is that Phil had carried the day for quite some time," said Paul Chartrand, director of the Aboriginal Governance program at the University of Winnipeg. "So, it's the first time for quite a number of years that the outcome has been pretty well a wide-open issue. No one I spoke to leading up to this felt confident enough to predict a real front-runner."

Leonard Rickard, a 33-year-old business executive who grew up in Moose Cree First Nation in northern Ontario, was one of the thousands of aboriginals attending the general assembly as an observer. He's hopeful the vote is a watershed moment in Canadian aboriginal politics. "You can feel the momentum ... People are so excited and emotional," he said. "I think what happened last June with [Prime Minister Stephen Harper's] apology [to residential school victims] has pushed people past this crest of despair. And now there's a feeling that things are bad, yes, but we can see the light at the end of the tunnel."

He said both were ideal candidates because of their age and platforms, which focus on economic development and education.

It's not uncommon for voting to extend to fourth or fifth ballots, but it hasn't happened recently in elections won by Mr. Fontaine.

Kiera L. Ladner, an associate professor at the University of Manitoba and Canada research chair in Indigenous politics & governance, said both candidates represented a "pathway to rebuilding" the AFN.

"I think we are seeing a changing of the guard within the AFN, but we're also seeing a timid changing of the guard. We're not seeing a major [push of support] behind anyone."

-CP

NEW NATIVE LEADER READY TO TAKE ACTION

CALGARY -- It took almost 24 hours of voting, but Shawn Atleo has become the new national voice for First Nations people.

After eight rounds, the 42-year-old Aboriginal leader was sworn in as the grand chief of the Assembly of First Nations as native chanting wafted in the background.

"There is work to do," Atleo told the assembly.

"It is our time as indigenous people in this country to take our rightful place. It's our time to see the treaties implemented. It's our time to see the young ones supported. It's our time to make sure that the murdered, missing women that we call for a public inquiry."

Atleo said he would press the federal government to back up its apology over residential schools with more help for indigenous people.

"Make absolutely no mistake about the resolve that we must share to hold governments accountable," he said.

"My granny says when you offer up an apology you must follow through. You must act on what you said. Together we will make sure that the country of Canada makes good on the apology offered to the survivors of the residential school system. It is not acceptable."

Atleo also signalled he would like to focus on aboriginal youth. He said too many are in care, too many are unemployed and not enough are getting a good education.

"It's our time to move forward on a youth-based agenda to respect and honour the booming young population across this country."

Atleo won just more than 58% of the votes cast on the final ballot. He needed 60%, but rival Perry Bellegarde, a former leader of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, walked over, hugged Atleo and conceded defeat.

Atleo replaces Phil Fontaine, who did not seek re-election after three terms as the organization's leader.

After the first ballot, Atleo had looked like he was pulling into a commanding lead with 43% compared to Bellegarde's 29%.

Third-place candidate John Beaucage, former grand chief of the Union of Ontario Indians, withdrew with his 15% of the vote and sent his supporters to Bellegarde's camp, creating the marathon election.

SHOULD ALL FIRST NATIONS VOTE IN ELECTING NATIONAL CHIEF?

p.paul

Native people have always maintained that the fundamental principles of true democracy emanated from their ancient traditional cultures and customs where ordinary people, one by one, inherited the right to speak freely and vote for their leaders. Over the years this basic right virtually disappeared? The big question is, when, where, how and why did it disappear? Did we drift too far one way or another to reprieve it? This is one area that is sacred and must be maintained or our nations as we know them could also disappear.

This concern reflects the 2009 AFN election in Calgary for choosing our grand chief. Only chiefs of the 633 Reserves in Canada were eligible to vote in that election. With an overall population of nearly 800,000 first nations across Canada, 633 voters (chiefs) would hardly represent a tiny pinhole against the whole.

In the 2009 election some chiefs from small reserves with populations of fifty or sixty or less, having limited capacity and resources and questionable options within, held equal leverage with chiefs representing several thousands of people. In each case however, whether the chief represented 50 persons or 15,000 their vote had the same effect. Each reserve was allowed only one vote regardless of size or population. At first glance this procedure for vote

eligibility and voter registration would seem lop-sided or off base as if something were amiss or a mis-assessment were at play, which could readily hint a tinge of suspicion or scant imbalance. Be it right or wrong that however is how the First Nations voting system works in Canada today. Is it time for a change or correction? Think it over.

This is not to imply that improprieties occurred in the 2009 election, nor is it a condemnation that the election rules and regs were tipped or compromised for selecting our grand chief. But in reality, there seems to be an overriding lack of vital components in building a model democratic society, while at the same time a massive majority of first nations are denied a vote. Does this not bode well for building a true form of democracy?

Initially, true form of democracy was an inherent characteristic and an aboriginal composite in this land before 1492. Since then however it has radically altered in character and consequently became one of our finest gifts to the free world under which many countries ruled their societies for several centuries, and somehow it has managed to survive to this day.

Specifically speaking, democracy was exercised in native societies under the proviso that each individual regardless of their place or rank, would be guaranteed the absolute and inalienable right to free speech and free vote when electing tribal leaders. This was an iron-clad right and a totally unbiased freedom enjoyed by the masses and our nations.

We apparently have run afoul of our duties, responsibilities and customs by somehow absolving these individual individual since the arrival of euro-nations to our lands. Let us therefore dwell on this huge oversight and hopefully one day, see our elected leaders and our institutions come to terms with the misadventures of the past and duly pursue the right path to true democracy guaranteeing voting rights to all. This is one of the highest virtues inherited from our ancestors for which native people are universally renowned and respected.

The next national election for our grand chief is four years away which allows us time to revamp and revive our indigenous voting procedures and assure they run according to our indigenous ways and beliefs.

Let us hope that during the next four years, the masters in rights and freedoms will proclaim one day that all brothers and sisters across the land will be able to make their choice freely and independently step up to the ballot box and freely vote for the national chief according to their will, custom and conscience.

This is OUR CONCEPT. This is OUR CUSTOM. This is OUR WAY.

FIRST NATIONS SUE FOR ABORIGINAL RIGHTS

Matt Goerzen - Brandon Sun

James Ritchie, a historian hired by three Manitoba bands, says documents prove they had an agreement with the British Crown before Canada's Confederation.

BRANDON --Armed with newly discovered archival documents from the 18th century, three Dakota First Nations bands in Manitoba filed a comprehensive claim against the Canadian government Friday to prove they were never refugees.

The claim alleges that Canada misrepresented the Dakota people as "American refugees" in the 1870s, a label they believe was used to deny them aboriginal rights, land compensation, funding and recognition as Canadian aboriginal people under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

"Historically, unlike other First Nations that entered into treaties -- which involve surrender provisions -- the Dakota have never entered into any such treaty," the Dakotas' attorney Bruce Slusar said.

"Their relationship with the British Crown was one of peace, friendship, economic affiliation or trade and military support. They have never surrendered any interest in their lands or territory."

Slusar filed the claim in Saskatoon federal court late Friday afternoon on behalf of Canupawakpa Dakota Chief Frank Brown, Sioux Valley Chief Donna Elk, and Dakota Plains Chief Orville Smoke.

For nearly 140 years, successive Canadian governments have classified the Dakota people -- the largest division of the Sioux nation -- as refugees who fled the United States cavalry into Canada following the Minnesota Sioux War of 1862 and the battle of the Little Big Horn in 1876.

The court claim comes two years after the Canadian government offered a \$67-million settlement to the nine Dakota and the Lakota bands of Saskatchewan and Manitoba -- all of them non-treaty bands. The other six bands are not involved in the new claim.

The offer, which was ultimately rejected, reconfirmed Canada's position that the Dakota do not have aboriginal rights in Canada. It required comprehensive waivers from each Dakota/Lakota First Nation that would release Canada from any future claims by the bands for aboriginal treaty rights, future land claims, or any new hunting, trapping or fishing rights. "We're tired of this refugee stuff that's put upon us," Chief Brown said earlier this week. "We have evidence to prove that we are from here, and to prove that we are not refugees. These documents show that we are in our own rightful territory."

Brown was referring to several letters and sketches discovered by Manitoba historian James Ritchie, who works for the Dakota bands.

Ritchie, who is considered an expert on aboriginal oral history by UNESCO, says the documents date from between 1760 and 1860, predating Canada's Confederation.

The historian looked for an eyewitness in every decade between 1760 and 1860 who was in Northwestern Ontario, southern Manitoba or southern Saskatchewan and who met Dakota people.

"We did find at least one example from each decade," Ritchie said. "Some of them are British officers writing reports saying I met with chief so and so. One of them is simply the teenage son of an employee of Lord Selkirk who does a portrait painting of one of the Dakota chiefs. But he puts his name on it, and identifies that he painted it at the Red River.

"And this is at least 100 years before Canada acquired the territory."

In his search, Ritchie also came upon an internal government report that was never made public, which calls into question the validity of treaty documents made by Canada with several of the country's First Nations.

"The individuals in control of the documents, the translators, superintendents, and secretaries, many of them -- possibly all of them -- are involved in criminal fraud," Ritchie said.

"We have the government of Canada's own conclusion from the time, that they were involved in criminal fraud. That part of the argument is not putting forward the Dakota case, it's attacking the Canadian case."

Dakota Plains Chief Orville Smoke says the federal claim may ultimately force Canada back to the negotiating table with a proposal that makes sense.

"It's a means of keeping the door open."

The federal government now has 30 days to respond to the claim, Slusar said.

BC UNION OF CHIEFS REJECT ABORIGINAL TITLE OFFER

B.C. aboriginal leaders have started working on their own proposed law to redefine their land and resource claims, having scrapped the provincial government's offer to concede aboriginal title across the province.

The B.C. government's discussion paper has met with consistent opposition in hearings with aboriginal communities around the province that began in June. The discussion paper has now been "set aside," and lawyers for aboriginal bands are seeking their own way to end the constant court battles over land rights, the president of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs said in a letter to members this week.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip said it's clear several key parts of the government's proposal won't be accepted by aboriginal people. The idea of "reconstituting" B.C.'s 203 bands into about two dozen "indigenous nations," as they existed prior European contact, is seen as a loss of local autonomy, and the proposed Indigenous Nations Commission is viewed as another layer of bureaucracy.

Community and tribal meetings have also identified "that there is a risk of including aboriginal title recognition in legislation which also recognizes Crown title in any form," Phillip wrote. The letter reflects aboriginal leaders' conclusion that they have the upper hand in discussions with the province, after a series of court actions strengthening aboriginal claims and weakening the position of B.C. and Ottawa.

"We have an opportunity unlike any other in our history," Phillip wrote. "The province has been compelled through law and politics to agree to recognition of title. We must use this opportunity well."

Aboriginal Relations Minister George Abbott said it's too early to conclude that the government's offer is dead. He intends to wait until a chiefs' assembly in late August and a final verdict from the First Nations' Leadership Council, the powerful three-member group that includes Phillip.

"We haven't actually received any direct communication from the leadership council to this point that they believe indigenous nations or any other elements in the discussion paper are abandoned," Abbott said in an interview Tuesday.

He also disagreed with the suggestion that provincial Crown title to much of B.C. is at risk as aboriginal groups press their claims to areas that were never ceded by treaty.

A B.C. Supreme Court decision last year suggested that the Tsilhqot'in people have proven they are the rightful owners of a valley near Williams Lake, and that the forests ministry has no right to licence logging on what it considers Crown land. That decision is being appealed as the B.C. government looks for a simpler, more cooperative way to settle aboriginal claims that affect 100,000 transactions every year.

FEDS PROMISE NEW SCHOOL FOR TOBIQUE

By Mark Rickard

The Canadian government will spend roughly \$8 million on a new kindergarten to Grade 8 school for Tobique First Nation, Tobique-Mactaquac MP Mike Allen announced last week.

"We want to get this school under construction as soon as possible," Allen stated. "After community consultation and the architectural drawings are finished, we hope to start construction next year."

Allen said the new project will open up employment opportunities for natives and local residents during the school construction. The existing Mah-Sos school was constructed to resemble a fiddlehead with classrooms radiating off a central corridor. The MP said he hopes the new facility will reflect Tobique's culture.

"I am expecting there will be some unique features in it to reflecting Maliseet culture. I am not sure where the new school will be built on the existing foundation or near the temporary school."

When asked if the swimming pool and sports complex which are attached to the old school could be salvaged or reopened, Allen replied that would be examined during the design phase of the facility.

"Having access to safe learning environments and a quality education is essential to the future success of First Nations youth, socially and economically," Allen commented.

"Improving educational achievement for Aboriginal peoples is a shared responsibility in which governments, communities, educators, families and students all have a role to play. Our government will continue to make investments such as this to promote long-term improvements in education, and give First Nations students the tools they need to achieve their goals."

The MP said he received several congratulatory emails and messages from Tobique First Nation residents who are excited about the new school.

"This school is important to the community, it is important to have better outcomes in education at Tobique. They represent the largest growing population we have in Canada today," he said. "This will also represent an opportunity for our trades people to get work locally during the (economic) slowdown."

The MP said the government will be working with Tobique and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to make sure the new facility has a proper maintenance program.

"There is a big interest in the First Nations community to get this school built ... I believe there is a significant interest that this school remains viable and doesn't go downhill."

Tobique First Nation Chief Stewart Paul did not return phone calls on the announcement, but the government press release included his comments.

"I am thrilled beyond words and very thankful to the Government of Canada for responding to what was obviously a crisis in our community," said Chief Paul. "A new school will boost the morale of our entire community and is a key component for enabling us to continue towards self-determination and more importantly, will greatly assist us to retain our Maliseet culture. I am particularly grateful for the efforts of our Member of Parliament, Mike Allen, for successfully achieving this objective."

The new 2,500 square metre facility will house up to 268 kindergarten to Grade 8 students. Tobique students are currently housed in the First Nations fisheries building.

The federal money is part of the \$33-billion Building Canada Plan. The school investment at Tobique First Nation is one of eight new schools or school renovation projects funded through the Building Canada Plan.

MALISEET CHIEF OF 12 YEARS RE-ELECTED

By Jen Lynds -BDN

HOULTON, Maine — The Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians will stay their leadership course for another four years, as Brenda Commander, the tribal chief for the past 12 years, easily won re-election during tribal elections a little more than a week ago.

During an interview at the Maliseet administration building Tuesday afternoon, Commander acknowledged that she is looking forward to digging deeper into projects as she progresses further into her fourth four-year term.

"I am very excited," she said in an interview in her spacious office, which is copiously decorated with snowshoes, baskets and other crafts made by tribal members. "I was pleased with the election results, and I am looking forward to another term."

Commander bested opponents Michael Kelley and Tina Beaver, securing 136 votes to Kelley's 55 and Beaver's 43. Three new Tribal Council members — Crystal Tucker, Louie Tomah and John Flewelling — also were elected to the six-member council.

The tribal chief is not subject to term limits.

The tribe, which became federally recognized in 1980, has more than 1,000 members. The Maliseets staff a health department, as well as economic development, natural resources and education and language departments, among others.

During her tenure, Commander has helped create new programs while working with others to pull in grant money for housing, health and domestic violence services. She has coordinated the establishment of the Maliseet Police Department and last year helped situate Nuhkomoss Wik, the new shelter for battered women and their children, on tribal grounds.

Commander also has collaborated with Houlton town officials on behalf of the tribe to complete road and environmental projects.

Commander said she has a number of goals for the coming years, including maintaining the tribe's existing programs and infrastructure while also juggling new tasks.

The chief said she wants to help develop modern children's educational programs, as well as answer the call of tribal members who would like to see a tribal cemetery.

"Our tribal leadership would like to establish one, and I feel it is a good idea," said Commander.

"Another goal is to create a cultural center or a museum."

The chief said tribal members have encountered numerous visitors who want to know whether the band has a museum or a place on the reservation to purchase handcrafted Maliseet goods, but such a place does not yet exist.

"We should have one," she acknowledged Tuesday afternoon. "That would be part of a larger goal to further economic development here. We need a place to sell baskets, snowshoes, beaded crafts and other things. That would bring money to our tribe, put more tribal members to work and help to showcase our crafts and culture."

Another major project will be overseeing the construction and eventual expansion of a more than \$2 million health center to serve residents.

"It is going to be a lot of work," she said Tuesday. "But I believe we can accomplish it."

MALISEET HOUSING GETS \$2M BOOST

By Jen Lynds -BDN

HOULTON, Maine — The Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians will tap into \$2 million in federal stimulus money to expand housing for tribal members.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development awarded the money through the federal stimulus package. The Maliseets are to use it to improve housing, according to a joint announcement Wednesday by U.S. Sens. Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins.

The tribe's housing director, Aaron Greenlaw, said the money would be used to construct eight rental units.

"This is going to be a great addition to the 68 units we already have," he said. "We currently have a waiting list for housing, so this is going to help alleviate the problem."

The tribe, which became federally recognized in 1980, has more than 1,000 members.

Greenlaw said the tribe's last major housing project was in 2002, when 18 single-family units were constructed. He said 215 people live in tribal housing.

According to Greenlaw, about 45 people are on a waiting list, and additional housing "has always been a priority for us."

"But the cost of construction materials has gone up, and it is not easy to afford to do such a significant project today," he said.

Greenlaw said the project also would boost the local economy because the tribe wants to hire local contractors and buy material locally.

Greenlaw estimated that work to secure contractors and material would begin immediately.

MAINE EPISCOPALIANS MOVE TO BACK TRIBES

By Judy Harrison - BDN

A resolution endorsed by Maine Episcopalians nearly two years ago that calls for England to rescind a 500-year-old charter was approved last week by representatives to the denomination's national convention in Anaheim, Calif.

The charter, called the Doctrine of Discovery, was used to justify the subjugation of American Indians in the Americas and the dispossession of their lands by European sovereigns.

Episcopalians from around the country on July 15 overwhelmingly approved a resolution that calls for the repudiation of the doctrine, Brenda Hamilton, 46, of Waldoboro said Wednesday. Hamilton, who attends St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Newcastle, was a delegate to the House of Deputies, which is composed of clergy and lay representatives. The House of Bishops held its own meetings at the same time and unanimously approved the resolution, she said Wednesday.

The national convention is held every three years. This year, it was held from July 8 to 17. The resolution, according to Hamilton, is nearly identical to one passed in October 2007 at the annual convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Maine held in Bangor. The Maine diocese was the first in the nation to call for the church to repudiate the doctrine that Episcopalians have agreed "is fundamentally opposed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

The Episcopal Diocese of Central New York passed a similar resolution in November 2008. John Dieffenbacher-Krall, a member of St. James' Episcopal Church in Old Town and the executive director of the Maine Indian Tribal-State Commission, introduced the resolution that passed in Maine but was unable to attend the meeting in Anaheim, Hamilton said.

The Doctrine of Discovery, set forth by King Henry VII in 1496, held that Christian sovereigns and their representative explorers could assert dominion and title over non-Christian lands with the full blessing and sanction of the church, according to Dieffenbacher-Krall.

It has been cited in U.S. Supreme Court decisions to justify "treating indigenous nations and Native Americans as second-rate citizens," he said two years ago.

The resolution passed in Anaheim asks each diocese "to reflect upon its own history, in light of these actions and encourage all Episcopalians to seek a greater understanding of the Indigenous Peoples" and "to support those peoples in their ongoing efforts for their inherent sovereignty and fundamental human rights as peoples to be respected."

In her testimony last week, a copy of which was e-mailed to the Bangor Daily News, Hamilton challenged Episcopalians "to root out" of the church and society those institutional prejudices and assumptions that are based in the Doctrine of Discovery.

"I live in New England," she told the House of Deputies last week. "I have stood in many Colonial meeting houses. I know that those churches stand on a foundation of genocide. This resolution asks us and our fellows in the [United Kingdom] who share this colonial history to acknowledge and to turn away from the unjust foundations on which we stand. History cannot and should not be rewritten, but the future can move forward to a new place."

Hamilton also called on members of her denomination "to examine the complex social and economic reasons for the chronic underfunding and financial dependence of our dioceses and missions in Navajoland, the Dakotas and other indigenous areas of our church."

She said Wednesday that passage of the resolution would allow the denomination to support efforts in Congress to expand the rights for self-governance sought by Maine's American Indian tribes and to weigh in on issues pertaining to tribal rights and funding for tribes throughout the country.

The resolution also calls for the denomination to support the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The U.S., Canada, New Zealand and Australia are the only nations that have not signed onto the declaration, according to the Episcopal church.

MORE MOHAWKS JOIN TO SETTLE BORDER ISSUE

Mohawks are close to an agreement with the Canada Border Services Agency on a temporary customs facility, the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne said Friday.

However, there are still some critical issues to resolve before the Massena-Cornwall Bridge can reopen, said the statement from Grand Chief Mike Mitchell.

"While we have a general agreement, there are specific areas that have to be clear for both sides to understand and be committed to it; for this reason, MCA delays support for a temporary station until such time as everything is clearly understood by both sides," Mitchell said in a statement.

At the same time, Mitchell acknowledged that the decision on a temporary customs facility on the Cornwall side of the north span is the CSBA's to make.

The bridge has been closed to general traffic since June 1st when Canadian border officers left their station on Cornwall Island, the midpoint between the two spans, which is on Akwesasne territory.

Earlier in the week there was a tentative agreement between the Mohawks and CSBA that included having the officers return to the station.

However, the union representing the officers scuttled the deal by saying the guards will never return to Cornwall Island under any circumstances.

Akwesasne Mohawk leaders met with CBSA officials again on Thursday in Ottawa

FIRST NATION CHIEF ADMITS HE BOUGHT VOTES

-Canwest News

The former chief of a Saskatchewan First Nation has admitted buying votes in the band's 2005 election. Charles Meechance, 51, pleaded guilty yesterday to fraud in the election for the Red Pheasant First Nation, a community about 100 kilometres northwest of Saskatoon. The election result was set aside by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada after an investigation into what happened in the lead-up to the April 8, 2005, vote. That was followed by an RCMP investigation and criminal charges. Meechance's plea follows a guilty plea by Bert Benson, who worked for the former chief and a slate of candidates during the 2005 election. Benson co-operated with the Crown and gave evidence about paying off-reserve band members \$100 to \$200 each to vote for Meechance and the others.

DAN'S CORNER, Crown Land is Indian Land

The land that has come to be known as Canada is Indian land, our land, and has always been our land.

At some point after contact those transplanted Europeans arrogantly decided that they would begin referring to Indian land as Indian Crown Land. This represents the beginning of the theft

of our land. It also represents the beginning of the creation of the legal fiction and political illusion that has come to be known as Canada. This was the eurocanadian means of legitimizing what they knew and still know as the theft of land. Theft of Indian land. If one reads European history one will discover that the theft of Indian land began much earlier. This was when the Christian church divided North America into portions and gave certain portions to different countries. Along with land grants the church also granted to European whites its go-ahead to conquer and populate Indian lands for in the minds of Church officials the occupiers were/are only sub-human savages. These savages were not civilized, not Christians, were/are not like Europeans for they did not try to conquer and convert "others" and they did not develop the land.

In the minds of Europeans the "permission" from the Christian church was and is the legitimizing force for the act of stealing land that does not rightfully belong to one. After all, the church gave its approval to steal savage land.

The Christian churches "permission" was what began the religious theft process of our land, and the methods that gave it life and sustainability, into the present, was the concept of Indian Crown Land. From there, it was simply a matter of time and eurocanadian chicanery attitudes for it to become simply Crown Land.

In the present day you add to the mix the eurocanadian's deliberate and calculated state of denial with respect to their theft of our land along with their "white is right" and "might is right" attitude and you have a situation where those eurocanadians are more than willing and able to annihilate more of our people in the same manner that they managed to annihilate the Beothuk, so that they may continue holding on to our land.

Maybe the eurocanadians won't annihilate our people in as blatant a manner as they once did but annihilate they will for they will not return our land simply because they know in their hearts that this land is our land. For their individual and collective greed is too great. Greater yet then even their individual and collective guilt for their theft of Indian land.

As Indian people we are duty-bound to do what we must do to continue what the Ancestors have instructed us to do. To honor, respect, nurture and protect our Sacred Earth Mother. And to honor, respect, nurture and protect the Ancestors, the People and the Seventh Generation.

All My Relations, Dan Ennis

DEAN'S DEN, - To the Future

Declaration, Petition, or Charter

Academic constitutional claim

It's more than these put together

It's direction, intention, and aim,

It's "the run" as well as "the run of"

Free course, and "holding the reins"

Political power invested

Impartial accommodation of gains,

Speech, expression, religion

What is coming - to one and to all

Hope and yearning and wanting

Elbowroom - for big and for small,

It's what is right and is proper

Freedom of choice - and the rest

It's "of, by, and for" to a people

Knowing themselves ... what is best!

D.C. Butterfield

Have a nice day