

Oneida Band Council

OFFICE: R.R. 2
SOUTHWOLD, ONTARIO
NOL 2G0

Telephone
652-3244
Code 519

August 16, 1979

Mr. Howard Cannon
Wisconsin Litigation Committee Co-ordinator.

Dear Sir,

Prior to the time that the New York Oneidas became divided into two opposing factions, which ultimately resulted in non-recognition of either group, it was realized that the fact that we Oneidas in fact existed as three distinct groups, each with its own accepted, recognized legal governing body, and that this very simple fact would one day become a hindrance at best.

Meetings between representatives of the three groups resulted in the recognition of the need for the Oneida Nation to exist in fact as one Nation, as well as the need to have the ability to speak with one united voice.

With this need in mind, a meeting was held in Washington by representatives of the three groups and including Norbert Hill along with Amelia and Ira Cornelius, giving the Wisconsin Oneida input into discussions relative to devising a proposal for a formal method of approaching and achieving success in our mutual land claims.

Our basic result was compiled into an "ONEIDA NATION TRI-COUNCIL" concept, and took the form of a proposed Constitution and By-Laws, in 1st. draft form.

The proposed Constitution and By-Laws were to be taken back to our respective Governing Bodies for Additions, Deletions or whatever appropriate actions our Governing Bodies considered proper. We agreed to meet again at a later date to combine any suggested changes into another draft form for further discussion. This procedure to continue until we reached a workable paper acceptable to all Governing Bodies.

On October 18, 1976, the Oneidas of the Thames Band Council had a special meeting where the proposed "ONEIDA NATION TRI-COUNCIL CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS" were read, explained and discussed, and as a result were accepted as explained, pending any necessary changes as might be recommended by either or both of the New York or Wisconsin Councils.

The New York Oneidas had previously also accepted the basic concept with the same basic proviso, that final acceptance could only come after possible changes as recommended by either or Ontario, Wisconsin Councils.

Further meetings were suggested by us to the Wisconsin Business Committee on this matter, but it appeared that the concept was never brought up at the Business Committee level, because we have had no feedback in any form until this present time.

It appears that your proposed "ONEIDA TREATY COUNCIL" is the counterpart of our proposed "ONEIDA NATION TRI-COUNCIL."

It would seem that at this point in time, it would only require a minimum amount of time and discussion to arrive at a mutually accepted concept if the two proposals could be incorporated into one.

However I do see a problem in that we seem to have different ideas on who should be involved in the setting up of such a group, regardless of what its eventual name or title should be.

Our concept does not include the setting aside, accepting and recognition of dissenting groups, religious or otherwise as entities separate from the Legal Governing Bodies. Our concept accepts that the Legal Governing Bodies have the responsibility of providing the needs and wants of its total Band Membership.

To this extent, our Band Council will authorize our three Spokesmen (delegates) to meet with comparable delegates representing the other two Legal Governing Bodies.

This would therefore limit discussions on this matter to our three delegates and your Wisconsin delegates only, acknowledging the fact that the New York Oneidas do not have a recognized Legal Governing Body at this time.

This will also limit our involvement with the New York Oneidas to "Social Gatherings" only, since neither of the two factions have official recognition, and thus do not have the authority to invite us to "Official" New York Oneida Nation meetings.

In regard to the factional division in New York, the very basic premises which divide the two factions are not compatible and do not permit the "official" coming together of the leaders of the two groups. Neither does it make allowance for outside mediation.

The only alternative left to the New York Oneidas is to understand that the form of government under which they choose to exist is their decision to make, and not the decision of those who purport to represent them and their best interests. True Oneida Democracy simply means power emanating from the people to and through their Spokesmen and not from the elected or appointed officials down to the people.

The New York Oneidas must get together as Oneida People without undue influence from either of the two present leader groups and decide for themselves, as Oneidas now and into the future, what form of government they wish to have represent them. At that time they must fully understand not only the benefits, but also the consequences of this major decision.

To such "Official" meetings the Oneidas of the Oneidas would send its delegates, but only at the written request of the two factions, with the proviso that each faction will abide by the decision of the people, without further disruptions in the affairs of the ONE ONIDA NATION.

(3).

I consider it an appropriate time, now, to have the Wisconsin Litigation Committee and the Thames delegates meet once again to discuss a combined "TREATY COUNCIL and TRI-COUNCIL" concept, and also what our combined role should be in the New York factional dispute.

It would also be an appropriate time to include Larry Aschenbrenner and Arlinda Locklear, because the Unity of Oneida purpose, to include the New York Oneidas is of great concern to them also.

May I suggest that the meeting at the Chicago airport was most convenient spot for all concerned the last time, and may I also suggest that you take the initiative to set a date and time in conjunction with N.A.R.F., because our three delegates seem to be the most adaptable of all the participants.

As soon as possible and thank you,

Irvin Chrisjohn

Irvin Chrisjohn,
RR # 2
Southwold, Ontario
NOL 2GO

