



Seneca County
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

1 DIPRONIO DRIVE
WATERLOO, NEW YORK 13165

PHONE: 315-539-1700
FAX: 315-539-0207

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Bureau of Indian Affairs
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Debra Anne Haaland, Secretary of the Interior
United States Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Darryl LaCounte, Director
Bureau of Indian Affairs
MS-4606
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Kimberly Bouchard
Eastern Regional Office
Bureau of Indian Affairs
545 Marriott Drive Suite 700
Nashville, Tennessee 37214

Re: Cayuga Indian Nation, Seneca County, State of New York

The purpose of this letter is to bring to your attention the concerns of the Seneca County Board of Supervisors with the ongoing actions of the designated federal representative of the Cayuga Indian Nation and the impact of such actions on the people of Seneca County.

For more than forty years, the people of Seneca County have had to deal with the assertion of sovereign rights by the Cayuga Indian Nation. The significant impacts include the loss of millions of dollars in property tax revenue to the local governments and school districts from tribal fee interest land without any reduction in services required to be provided, the deployment of an apparently illegitimate tribal police force, erosion of property rights, and confusion as to civil rights and obligations for both tribal and non-tribal members of the local community.

For the past decade, actions taken by the faction of the Cayuga Indian Nation led by Clint Halftown as the currently recognized federal representative have caused unrest, civil strife and issues of public safety.

In fact, the decision of your agency to deny the "Land into Trust" application of the Cayuga Indian Nation was based in part on the pattern of oppression, violence, and threats of physical and economic abuse towards members of the Nation's local community, let alone the public in general.

The 3:00 a.m. attack on commercial and personal interests by Mr. Halftown's paramilitary "security forces" on February 22, 2020, and the continued alleged harassment by the Halftown Cayuga Nation Police, of both tribal and community members, are but a few sad examples of the actions of the current tribal leadership under Mr. Halftown.

Seneca County recognizes that the Cayuga Indian Nation can be a valuable partner in our community, but that partnership requires tribal leadership that accepts responsibility for its actions and the negative impact that those actions have on their own people and our community at large.

If the current designated leadership of the Cayuga Indian Nation cannot accept the diversity of views of its own people, then how can we, Seneca County, expect that same leadership to act responsibly and reasonably in the future?

We do not suggest that the Seneca County Board of Supervisors can pick and choose who we believe represents the Cayuga Indian Nation as the designated federal representative. However, we can share our experience with both Halftown's leadership and that of the Gayogohó:nq' Council of Chiefs. It is clear to us that the commitment to fairness and cultural values of the Gayogohó:nq' Council of Chiefs offers our communities a better path forward to understanding and a positive model for the future.

The Seneca County Board of Supervisors urges you and the Bureau to examine the impact that the Bureau's designation of Mr. Halftown as the representative of the Cayuga Indian Nation has had on the day-to-day life and culture of the Cayuga people.

We suggest that you review not only the tribal leadership history, but also consider that if Mr. Halftown and his leadership council cannot be trusted to lead their own people justly and fairly, alternative leadership should be seriously considered for recognition.

Sincerely,

Robert W. Hayssen, Chairman
Board of Supervisors

SENECA COUNTY

RWH/de/ml

cc: U.S. Senator Charles Schumer
U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand
U.S. Congressman Tom Reed
U.S. Congressman John Katko
NY Senator Pamela Helming
NY Assemblyman Brian Manktelow
NY Assemblyman Jeff Gallahan

Chairman
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Town of Fayette

Finance Director
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Town of Ovid
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Town of Romulus
David Hayes

Town of Seneca Falls
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