

## **Proposed Letter from the Town of Enfield to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior**

Our Township of Enfield is located in the Fingerlakes area of New York State, in Tompkins County, NY. The land residents of Enfield occupy today was historically part of the Cayuga Nation. We are writing this letter out of kinship with the Nation and our concern for the wellbeing of the traditional Cayuga Nation citizens residing in the Town of Seneca Falls, Seneca County, NY, about 40 miles north of our town.

We understand that the Gayogohó:nq' (Cayuga Nation) has long been engaged in a protracted leadership dispute and that your agency has recognized the Halftown Council as the Cayuga Nation's tribal leadership "as a matter of Federal law." While this dispute has been carried on within the courts for many, many years, it has recently become increasingly dangerous as the Halftown Council engages in acts of physical aggression that put Cayuga citizens in danger and undermine their physical and economic well-being.

On February 22, 2020, in the Town of Seneca Falls, after the highest court in New York State declined to intervene in a property dispute between the two factions, residents were roused from their beds in the middle of the night and watched as a longhouse/schoolhouse, a daycare center, a general store, a gas station, a sugar shack where ice cream was served were razed by the BIA's designated "Federal Representative" Clint Halftown and his council.

Six cabin dwellings, gardens, an orchard and a cannery building were also leveled. In a few hours the central community infrastructure of traditional Cayuga Nation residents--the buildings they had used to educate their children, supply their groceries and fuel, grow and preserve their food—all were gone, in the middle of winter, during a pandemic. Since then, in what appears to be a further heightening of the dispute, the Halftown Council has brought a lawsuit to recover \$600,000 in "rent" from certain members of the Cayuga Nation they claim are illegally occupying tribal residences.

We urge the Bureau of Indian Affairs to take a pro-active role in protecting the citizens of the Cayuga Nation, by undertaking a thorough investigation into these recent affairs, and reassessing the competence and effectiveness of its designated "Federal Representative."