



June 30, 2021

Statement from Six Nations Chief Mark Hill in response to article in Turtle Island News

Chief Hill denounces a divisive, unfounded and irresponsible attack on his personal life by the Turtle Island News, and calls for the publication to issue an immediate apology and make a donation to an organization that supports Indigenous mental health.

“I have committed my professional life to fighting for our people, always motivated by the community’s best interest,” said Chief Hill. “My personal life, conducted privately and on my own time, has no bearing on my work, and should not be used as a revelation or a weapon to divide our people.”

On Wednesday, The Turtle Island News ran a story alluding to private photographs of Chief Hill, which he had shared electronically in the context of an online dating application, and with an expectation of privacy. The photographs were not “posted to social media” as the article claims, but shared privately with an individual through a dating app. Any subsequent dissemination or sharing of the images was done so without his consent.

Author and Turtle Island News Publisher Lynda Powless made unfounded, disparaging editorial suggestions that Chief Hill’s private dating life should be seen in conflict with his professional integrity, although there have been no formal complaints regarding the photos to the Six Nations Integrity Commission. Ms. Powless published the story after receiving a letter from Chief Hill’s lawyer advising her of the disparaging and irresponsible nature of her unfounded claims, as well as the fact that the Six Nations Election officer Steve Williams, who would review any code of conduct complaints, is currently involved in an unrelated lawsuit with Chief Hill. This conflict was not disclosed in the Turtle Island News.

Chief Hill rejects the harmful notion that his personal life is in any way “scandalous” or that photographs shared privately on his own time in any way distract from his tireless work on behalf of Six Nations.

Violations of personal privacy in this digital age have been shown to be both criminally and morally inexcusable, and to have profoundly negative impacts on mental health, especially among young people.

“At this moment, we are working to protect our people through a global pandemic, to comprehend the scope of the atrocities committed against us at so-called “Residential Schools” and to win long overdue respect and support from the Canadian government,” said Chief Hill. “Attacks on my personal life must not be used as a distraction from this vital work. We cannot allow ourselves to be divided, and we will not allow each other to be disparaged.”

Over the course of his service to Six Nations, Chief Hill has conducted himself with utmost integrity while enduring vicious personal attacks, including the 2020 destruction of his home by arson.

Chief Hill calls upon the Turtle Island News to formally apologize for this violation of his privacy and misuse of journalistic resources, and to make a donation in his name to an organization that supports Indigenous mental health.

Anyone who has experienced online harassment or bullying as a result of their personal identity, or who has had personal information shared without their consent, is encouraged to seek out support through the Talk4Healing Help Line at 1-855-554-HEAL or the Kids Help Phone at 1-800-668-6868 or through text at 686868.