

Confederacy divided over flag-raising issue

by Andrea Buma

OHSWEKEN - The Beaver-clan led gesture in raising the Confederacy flag over the old council chambers last week has prompted a heated exchange of views during a Confederacy meeting Saturday.

Norm Jacobs reports that the meeting was not an official Council because there were no Seneca or Mohawk Chiefs present, but the assembled people did discuss what happened on January 27th.

Jacobs said that many pointed out that the flag raised at the library is not necessarily accepted as the Confederacy flag by all Hodenosaunee, "A lot of people use the Hiawatha flag as a symbol -- but it has never been accepted as the official, recognized symbol of the Confederacy," he said.

Jacobs explained that historically there was a lance with 6 feathers hanging from it that served as a symbol of the Confederacy.

The majority of Confederacy members were against the gesture by the Beaver clan. Jacobs said that decisions need to be made by consensus, that the Peacemaker taught them to put away their weapons, and to use dialogue and communication to accomplish goals. He said that they must be of one heart, one body, and one mind, and when a clan goes off on their own, they are breaking the

unity.

Chief Arnie General seemed genuinely surprised and saddened by the unexpectedly strong backlash against his clan's move. He said, "I did it because I felt it was the right thing to do. I wanted a place for people to look at their clan titles. That's it. The whole thing got blown out of proportion, it has created a controversy, which wasn't the intent."

But General stands steadfastly behind his actions. He points out that the Confederacy hasn't been at the forefront enough. He claims that they are being overrun and dictated to by other governments. General said that the Confederacy has been frequently criticized for *doing nothing, and now are being criticized for doing something.* "Its hard to judge peoples' reaction, 'cause the motivator is money. I know we need some, but do we need to sell our future for it?"

The Confederacy claims that they already knew the building was theirs, that this was already established back in the early 1990s by then S/N Council Chief Bill Monture, who said that "the building is yours whenever you want it."

Jacobs says what's at issue is the

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fact that the federal government owes Confederacy 63 years of back rent, because they were using a Confederacy-owned building. He says that the Beaver clan's move may have jeopardized that position.

District 5 Councillor John Peters seemed to dispute Confederacy's right to the building earlier in the week, pointing out that the current S/N elected council building doesn't belong only to the elected council but to all the people. Likewise the old confederacy chambers would seem to be the peoples', too.

The elected council voted Tuesday to direct Chief Wellington Staats to meet with

police services board chairman Bob Johnson on the issue, to see if the police should be used to re-open the building. The library has been closed since the occupation began a week ago.

Staats said he believed the building would better serve the community by remaining open as a library. Councillor Dave Green said he believed the occupation is not being supported by a majority of the Confederacy but is instead the work of a small group more interested in publicity.

Chief Arnie General is glad that they did something, and says that they weren't trying to destroy anything but were trying instead to build. He hopes to get the support