HAUDENOSAUNEE CONFEDERACY MAKES IMPORTANT STRIDES ON BORDER CROSSING ISSUE

For Immediate Release
Akwesasne Mohawk Territory – Enniskó:wa (March) 3, 2008

The Chiefs, Clanmothers, Faithkeepers, and people of the Mohawk Nation extend greetings and offer thanksgiving. The Mohawk Nation Council of Chiefs would like to take this time to report on recent developments concerning the border crossing issue.

The month of February has proved to be a pivotal month in the work of the Grand Council appointed Haudenosaunee Documentation Committee (HDC). After narrowing its selection down to two documentation manufacturers, the HDC held final interviews with two bidding companies on February 4th at the Tuscarora Nation Territory. On February 13th, the HDC held final deliberations and rendered a decision on which manufacturer it would recommend to the Haudenosaunee Grand Council of Chiefs.

Subject to a final approval by the Haudenosaunee Grand Council of Chiefs, the HDC decided through consensus to recommend Siemens AG as the manufacturer of the new Haudenosaunee identification card and Haudenosaunee passport. For over 160 years, Siemens AG has been a world leader in technology development and brings its lengthy experience and renowned competency to our project.

On February 21st, a delegation from the Haudenosaunee traveled to Washington DC to meet with the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Embassy of Canada to continue discussions on the political recognition of our revised identification cards and passports. Meeting directly with the coordinator of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) coordinator Colleen Manaher, the Haudenosaunee delegation resumed its dialogue by first “polishing the chain”; a traditional protocol whereby the United States is reminded of our unique nation-to-nation relationship established centuries ago.

During the meeting with DHS, the HDC announced the status of its new national identification card and passport. It was explained to the officials in attendance that as a sovereign nation and member of the international community, the Haudenosaunee are adhering to international security standards as opposed to standards established by the United States. While somewhat productive, as in previous discussions with DHS, the Haudenosaunee delegation were informed that the final rule on land border crossing has not yet been released and until that time, DHS is not yet able to recognize any enhanced documentation issued by Indigenous Peoples. The final ruling is expected to be realized by the end of March 2008, whereby a continuation of meetings with both the United States and Canada is expected to take place. However, DHS reaffirmed that they will continue to accept the Red Cards and all other Indian Nation issued photo I.Ds until at least June 2009.
This past weekend, a session of the Haudenosaunee Grand Council of Chiefs was held at the Onondaga Nation Longhouse, whereby the Six Nations approved the recommendation of Siemens AG as the official manufacturer of the new Haudenosaunee identification card and passport.

Within the next couple of months, Siemens and the HDC will endeavor upon an intensive 15-day assessment and inventory period, whereby the scope of the project will be evaluated and planned out; resulting in a comprehensive timetable to effectively and efficiently develop the two new documents as well to determine its infrastructure throughout the territories of the Six Nations Confederacy. According to Siemens’ proposal, the new documents and its infrastructure would be ready in between 3-9 months following the 15-day assessment period.

We would like to assure you that the Haudenosaunee take this issue seriously and are working tirelessly to see this project achieve fruition. We ask you to remain patient and remind you that our current Haudenosaunee Identification Card (Red Card) and the Haudenosaunee Passports is still being accepted by the US Customs and Border Protection until June 2009. If you have any questions, please contact the Mohawk Nation Office at 518.358.3381 or contact your local Longhouse leadership.

Mohawk Nation Council of Chiefs
Haudenosaunee Confederacy

-30-