



Annual Report  
2014-2015

# Reclaiming Our Nations

Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians



## Messages from the Political Executive

Grand Chief Gord Peters

Deputy Grand Chief Denise Stonefish

Recognizing our Elder Lois Cornelius

## Priority Initiatives

Border Crossing

Child Welfare and Jurisdiction

Community Safety – Policing

Education

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

Non-Insured Health Benefits

Polishing the Chain

Tobacco - Intertribal Trade

Treaty of Niagara

Treaty of Ghent - Pledge of the King's Promise

Working with Our Youth

## In Loving Memory

## Staff List



## Grand Chief Gord Peters

From education, to child welfare, to treaty work, our communities have spent this year exercising their jurisdiction in more and more formidable ways.

Our identity is getting stronger every day. Our culture and languages are coming back because our children are demanding it. Our Peoples' capacity is growing because we will no longer stand for oppressive policies and practices. Together, we are on the verge of achieving great progress and we must not slow down in 2015.

As we look forward toward to the coming year, we must continue to exercise jurisdiction while building better relationships that are reflective of the intent of our treaties.

2014 was in many ways a year of a massive movement for our Nations, but now our collective duty is to carry that spirit into 2015, a year that will see the continued resurgence of our Peoples and reclaiming of our Nations.



## Deputy Grand Chief Denise Stonefish

This year's Annual Report presents insights on the key accomplishments, challenges and activities that have impacted our Member Nations.

I'd like to take this moment to express appreciation for the service of the Chiefs Council and Grand Chief Peters for their devotion and commitment to supporting and advocating for our Member Nations.

In addition, many thanks to the staff for their dedication and the excellent work that they provide to the Association. Their expertise is also most appreciated.

I look forward to working and continuing our concerted efforts in assisting our Member Nations in blazing new paths, together.

## Recognizing Elder Lois Cornelius

The Chiefs and staff of AIAI recognize and thank Elder Lois Cornelius for her unwavering commitment to her role, and her continued support of our Member Nations.

Lois has been our elder for 15 years and in that time has shared her guidance and wisdom at many of our meetings, events and gatherings. She is always kind and thoughtful in her remarks, and always takes the time to share the meanings of her prayers as spoken in Oneida.

Lois has been a longstanding leader in the Oneida Nation. As the first administrator for Oneida's administration of office, she supported the growth of her community for more than 20 years. After leaving that role, she later served as an elected Councillor for another 10 years.

Lois has always been an advocate for Indigenous communities, constantly supporting the growth of our Nations and Peoples. Her work and dedication is greatly appreciated by all of us at AIAI, and we would like to recognize and honour her many years of service. We look forward to the wisdom and advice she continues to share for many more years to come.

With much love and gratitude, we thank you. Yaw^ko.





## Border Crossing

Until we are able to use our own recognized identification documents, Indigenous Peoples are required to use status cards and other Canadian/US documents when crossing the border. Indigenous Peoples need a secure card that is recognized by both Canada and the United States for crossing international borders.

AIAI has worked with border officials at the Detroit Port Authority and Port Huron Port of Entry to address issues resulting from discrimination and travelling with sacred items. It was clear from the meeting that the border officials are not well informed about sacred items, but there was an interest to learn more and to improve their policies.

We will continue to work with other Port Authorities and Ports of Entry our Peoples use to cross the border to ensure our citizen's rights are protected.

## 2014/2015 Accomplishments

- Provided education and cultural competency training to officials at the Port Huron Port of Entry
- Developed and distributed a pamphlet for AIAI Member Nation citizens to educate them on their rights when crossing an international border

## Child Welfare and Jurisdiction

AIAI has been mandated to create a critical path to exercising our pre-existing jurisdiction over our children. This right is re-affirmed by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:

*"Recognizing in particular the right of indigenous families and communities to retain shared responsibility for the upbringing, training, education and well-being of their children, consistent with the rights of the child"*

This past year, the Government of Ontario also provided First Nations with a "blueprint" for the Aboriginal Children and Youth Strategy (ACYS) which is intended to improve outcomes and opportunities for Indigenous children and youth.

## 2014/2015 Accomplishments

- AIAI leadership participated in two round-tables on the direction of the ACYS
- Implemented a working group to provide input into the Child and Family Services Act Review
- Hosted a Child Welfare Symposium in December, 2014

## Community Safety – Policing

Community safety is a critical issue for our Member Nations. One pillar of safe communities is having access to policing services that are culturally competent and which meet the needs of our citizens.

The 2014-2018 Ontario First Nation Policing Agreement (OFNPA) process has continued to be problematic and has become a barrier to achieving high-quality and appropriate services. In 2013, Canada and Ontario offered a five-year extension of the First Nations tripartite policing agreement to First Nations in Ontario. Due to unresolved issues, mainly inequitable funding, these agreements were renewed for only one year.

First Nations leaders have signed the 2014-2015 OFNPA for a period of one year. Discussions will begin shortly on negotiating the 2015 agreement.

## 2014/2015 Accomplishments

- AIAI has been actively advocating for the proper negotiation of agreements between First Nations, Ontario, and Canada.

## Education

AIAI's education unit was mandated to develop our own system of life-long learning this past year. Work has begun to engage our Member Nation communities on this model, and will continue into next year.

While this work has been underway, the federal government announced \$1.9 billion in education funding this year with the condition that First Nations accept the proposed First Nations Control of First Nation Education Act (FNCFNEA). Upon review of the proposed legislation, it was deemed unacceptable as it did not support meaningful consultation, equitable funding, or local jurisdiction. The federal government has yet to withdraw Bill C-33. The government did release \$500 million in infrastructure funds for First Nations, and has stated it will only move forward with interested regions and First Nations individually.

## 2014/2015 Accomplishments

- AIAI Chiefs Council adopted political resolutions rejecting Bill C-33
- Political action initiatives were coordinated including a national resistance rally held in May of 2014
- A lobby day was held with federal party leaders urging for a withdrawal of Bill C-33 and calling for an end to underfunding of education from kindergarten to post-secondary
- NDP leader Tom Mulcair committed to supporting First Nations in our education aspirations if elected in the 2015 federal election







## Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

This year, the Chiefs of Ontario called for an Ontario First Nations specific inquiry to be conducted into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. This inquiry is to be led in partnership with Indigenous Nations and organizations from across the country. This year AIAI's Deputy Grand Chief Denise Stonefish, through her leadership role on the Ontario First Nations Women's Caucus, led the initial work towards a First Nations-led inquiry process.

### 2014/2015 Accomplishments

- A three-day planning gathering for the families of murdered and missing women girls was held in Thunder Bay in February, 2015
- AIAI has organized a working group on ending violence in the family. This working group is compiling a resource kit that will list all of the services and programs offered both in the communities and in local city centres

## Non-Insured Health Benefits

Problems with the Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) program have been mounting for First Nations both regionally and nationally for a number of years. This year AIAI engaged health directors and technicians from our Member Nations to better understand the NIHB issues that are occurring at the community level.

### 2014/2015 Accomplishments

- A national review of NIHB is currently underway. AIAI has maintained active political representation in this process through the Chiefs Committee on Health and will continue to do so in the coming year
- Health directors meeting discussing NIHB in October of 2014
- Provided feedback into the Ontario regional NIHB strategy
- The AIAI NIHB working group identified issues and recommendations for initiatives over the next year

## Polishing the Chain | Rebuilding Relationships with the Province of Ontario

The foundation of our treaties is built on the principle of co-existence. A departure from this principle has led to the subjugation of our pre-existing jurisdiction to the imposed powers and legislative authority of the province and the Government of Canada.

The Political Confederacy (PC) has supported a proposal, *Polishing the Chain*, which is comprised of three components. First, it seeks to negotiate a Political Accord with the Premier of Ontario; secondly, it seeks to establish a process to resolve high-level areas of jurisdiction; and finally, it seeks to test First Nations jurisdiction through a piloted initiative.

### 2014/2015 Accomplishments

- Chiefs in Assembly passed a resolution in June, 2014 to advance and define a political strategy with the province of Ontario
- The Political Confederacy submitted a proposal to the Premier of Ontario in November, 2014 to facilitate and support our Nations to exercise jurisdiction
- In March of 2015 the Political Confederacy passed a motion in support of the draft accord
- Chief Mike Mitchell, Ogichidaa Warren White, and Grand Chief Gord Peters have been negotiating with the Premier of Ontario throughout this process







## Tobacco - Intertribal Trade

The Indigenous tobacco industry is currently under attack by the Canadian Government. Bill C-10, the Tackling Contraband Tobacco Act came into force on April 10, 2015. This legislation creates a new Criminal Code offence related to contraband tobacco. Under this new law repeat offenders will automatically receive a minimum sentence.

In addition, the provincial Raw Leaf Tobacco regulation attempts to allow the province of Ontario oversight of all activity related to raw leaf tobacco grown on First Nations territory. The province wants to manage and monitor the movement of tobacco products and impede the flow of untaxed products. The Ministry of Finance's Raw Leaf Tobacco Program commenced on January 1, 2015. Under the Raw Leaf Tobacco Program, the Ministry will be issuing registration certificates and carrying out inspections and investigations as required. After engaging First Nations about the regulations, the Ministry did not provide First Nations with any type of exemption for growing on reserve for traditional use in the regulation.

The Canada Revenue Agency is reassessing wholesale distributors who are selling large quantities of yellow branded tobacco to First Nations on reserve. The wholesale distributors are being assessed for owing the government millions of dollars in uncollected taxes. Wholesalers are being advised by CRA not to sell yellow branded cigarettes to First Nations.

### 2014/2015 Accomplishments

- In September of 2014, Grand Chief Peters presented to the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs in rejection of Bill C-10
- AIAI has brought our complaints to the attention of various MPs
- AIAI has met with wholesale distributors and other groups who are advocating against the imposition of the federal and provincial government regulations on our communities' economies





## Treaty of Niagara

First Nation leaders, elders and citizens gathered along the Niagara River for two days in August to share teachings and celebrate the 250th Anniversary of the Treaty of Niagara.

The 1764 Treaty of Fort Niagara was signed by Sir William Johnson for the Crown and 24 Nations from the Six Nations, Seneca, Wyandot of Detroit, Menominee, Algonquin, Nipissing, Ojibwa, Mississaugas, and others. This Treaty set a path for the development of Canada.

This Treaty is significant as it reaffirmed the political foundation for the Covenant Chain Relations between Great Britain and the Indigenous Nations of the Great Lakes and Northeastern Woodlands. It also guaranteed the Indigenous Nations our lands, hunting, fishing and other inherent rights.

## Treaty of Ghent - Pledge of the King's Promise

This year we celebrated the 200 year anniversary of the Pledge of the King's Promise - a promise made to Indigenous Peoples following the end of the War of 1812.

In 1815 a gathering was held at Burlington Heights (present day Hamilton) where William Claus presented a wampum belt to the 20 Nations who were allies of the British during the war.

*"In making Peace with the Government of the United States of America, your interests were not neglected, nor would Peace have been made with them had they not consented to include you in the Treaty, which they at first refused to listen to. I will now repeat to you one of the Articles of the Treaty of Peace which secures to you the Peaceable Possession of all the Country which you possessed before the late War, and the Road is now open for you to pass and repass without interruption."*





## Working with Our Youth

The youth are the future of our Nations. AIAI has worked hard this year to ensure that our political and program work is not only reflective of the needs of our youth, but also provides them with opportunities to grow, learn and develop leadership skills.

To that end, we hosted a Youth Wellness Symposium in March to equip our young people with skills and tools for leadership. This event was also an opportunity to build a foundation for the AIAI Youth Wellness Strategy. The symposium provided valuable feedback in the areas of youth wellness in AIAI communities.

AIAI also provides supports for two youth representatives to participate in political activities including AIAI's Annual General Assembly and the Ontario First Nations Young Peoples Council.

## In Loving Memory | Honouring our Elders and Leaders

AIAI would like to honour and recognize the contributions of the community leaders and elders we have lost this year.

**Charles Daigle**  
Elder, Batchewana First Nation

**Sandra Lewis-Den Otter**  
Councillor, Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte

**Mickey (Michael) Syrette**  
Elder, Batchewana First Nation

**Ronald E. Howard**  
Elder, Hiawatha First Nation

**Leo Sayers**  
Elder, Batchewana First Nation

**Elizabeth White**  
Elder, Batchewana First Nation

**Georgina Jordan**  
Elder, Batchewana First Nation

**William D. Shilling**  
Elder, Hiawatha First Nation





Ashley Albert  
Policy Advisor



Elly Antone  
HIV/AIDS Educator



Sherry Antone  
Policy Advisor



Brandy Cornelius  
Administrative Support/Reception



Carolyn Doxtator  
Healthy Lifestyles Educator



Zachariah General  
Policy Advisor



Valerie George  
H/SAB Community Development Specialist



Lisa Jackson  
Responsible Gambling Educator



Gina McGahey  
Policy Advisor



Suzanne Morrison  
Communications Coordinator



Suzanne Nicholas  
Health & Wellness Coordinator



Amanda Powless  
Finance Manager



Shayna Phillips  
Administrative Support/Reception



Kimberly Snake  
Capacity Development Specialist



Geoff Stonefish  
Office Manager



This photo was taken at the National Day of Action on June 21, 2014 in Ottawa. Chiefs, staff, and citizens from AIAI and our Member Nations participated in this national protest.

**Repeal Bill C-33:  
First National Control of First  
Nation Education Act**

**Demand a Public Inquiry into the  
over 1,000 Missing and  
Murdered Indigenous Women**

**Repeal Bill C-10:  
Contraband Tobacco Act**