

## **FEDERAL COURT RESOLVES CAYUGA NATION LEADERSHIP DISPUTE**

A federal court today issued a decision in the Cayuga Nation's long-standing leadership dispute.

In a 43-page opinion, Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly of the United States District Court for the District of Columbia affirmed decisions by the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs and Department of Interior recognizing the Cayuga Nation Council led by federal representative Clint Halftown and alternate representative Tim Twoguns as the rightful governing body of the Cayuga Nation.

Speaking on behalf of the Cayuga Nation Council, federal representative Halftown said the federal court's decision represented a major step forward for the Cayuga Nation. "The Nation is grateful for this decision which, we hope, will allow our Nation to move beyond the differences that have divided us for so long and unite us going forward."

A group within the Nation known as the "Unity Council" had challenged the federal government's two decisions as being in violation of Cayuga Nation law; the group had also challenged a "statement of support" campaign initiated by Halftown and Twoguns in 2016 which solicited the views of the Nation's citizens as to the Nation's leadership. That statement of support campaign revealed that over 60% of Cayuga Nation members supported the Nation Council led by Halftown and Twoguns. The Bureau of Indian Affairs issued a decision in December 2016 affirming the "statement of support" campaign and, in July 2017, the Department of Interior affirmed the Bureau of Indian Affairs' decision. The Unity Council filed suit in September 2017.

Today's decision rejected claims by the Unity Council that the decisions by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Department of Interior violated the federal Administrative Procedure Act and failed to provide due process, finding that both determinations were lawful based upon an independent review of Cayuga Nation law and that the "statement of support" campaign was a valid mechanism for selecting the Nation's leadership.

Earlier, in 2018, Judge Kollar-Kotelly had denied an application for a preliminary injunction by the Unity Council, finding it was "not likely to succeed on the merits of its claims, most of which are based on speculation or can be distilled to mere disagreements with the decisions reached by the agency."