

## **UNITED STATES TRANSFERS CAYUGA NATION LAND INTO TRUST; HISTORIC DECISION COMES 18 YEARS AFTER NATION FIRST SOUGHT TRUST STATUS**

Seneca Falls, New York - Earlier today, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Bryan Newland notified Clint Halftown, Heron Clan member of the Cayuga Nation Council and federal-representative for the Nation, that the Bureau of Indian Affairs has approved the Cayuga Nation's application to transfer land within its historic reservation boundaries into trust.

The Cayuga Nation submitted its fee-to-trust application in April 2005, making it the longest pending trust application before the BIA. After years of delay and opposition, the BIA rejected the Nation's application in July 2020, even though it had previously approved similar applications for many other Indian nations. The Nation challenged that decision in court. In December 2021, the BIA withdrew its faulty decision and announced that it would reconsider the Nation's application. The decision approving the Nation's trust application was signed yesterday.

"Despite many delays and constant political opposition, the Cayuga Nation never stopped fighting for approval of its trust application. Today is a historic day for the Nation and its citizens. We applaud the BIA and Assistant Secretary Newland for seeing the merit of our application and having the courage to approve it after all this time," said Mr. Halftown.

As a result of the BIA's decision, 101 acres of land in Cayuga County will be placed in federal trust status. The Nation operates a number of businesses on the new trust land, including an electronic gaming facility, a gas station, and a convenience store. Revenues from these businesses are used to fund services for the Nation's citizens.

Although the trust land accounts for only a small portion of the Nation's 64,015-acre reservation in what are now Cayuga and Seneca Counties, the BIA's decision reaffirms the Cayuga Nation's rights under the 1794 Treaty of Canandaigua and sends a clear message to those who questioned the Nation's sovereignty. "Even today, there are yard signs in Seneca and Cayuga Counties that say 'No Reservation.' The naysayers who have cynically opposed our very existence now have no excuse for not recognizing our reservation and our sovereignty. We call upon local leaders to accept the BIA's decision and stop wasting taxpayer dollars on frivolous lawsuits."

The Cayuga Nation was landless for almost 200 years due to a series of illegal land sales to the State of New York in 1795 and 1807. Since 2005 the Nation has acquired over 1,200 acres of its homeland and used that land to offer housing and start businesses that support its citizens. As other Indian nations have done, the Cayuga Nation will seek to transfer more of its fee-owned land into trust. "We will continue to reclaim our land and build a strong economic foundation for Cayuga citizens. Today's BIA decision is good news for our citizens, but our work is far from finished."