

Smoke Signals Radio Archive Episode 1992-05-09

Segment 1

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Dan Smoke relays news that, after a lengthy process, the jury selection has been made for the trial on the 1990 Oka crisis. Dan exclaims that this was one of the longest jury selection processes in Canadian history. Dan also shares details about his visit to the Oneida reserve and his discussion with Howard Elijah about equality of education.

Host(s): Dan Smoke, Mary Lou Smoke, John Turner

DAN SMOKE: Aanii, boozhoo, sge:no, shekóli, skanako:ka, aniish na! Yes, greetings to all our brothers and sisters out there. You are listening to Smoke Signals, a First Nations radio program here at Radio Western, CHRW 94.7 FM. We are heard every Saturday from 12:00-1:00 and the song you just heard was “**Long Hot Summer in the Great White North**” from the group **7th Fire** and their album entitled *Well, What Does It Take?* My name is **Dan Smoke** and I’m in the studio today with my co-hostess, **Mary Lou Smoke**, and our technical producer and co-host, **John Turner**. Hi Mary Lou.

MARY LOU SMOKE: Good afternoon.

JOHN TURNER: Hi Dan, how are ya?

DS: Good, good. How was everyone this week? How was your weeks? How was this week?

JT: Well, mine was pretty good. I’ve had a bad cold so I didn’t do very much of anything. I didn’t do anything interesting at all. I’m sure you and Mary Lou have...you spent the whole week doing all sorts of interesting things.

MLS: No, it was a quiet week for us (*laughter*).

DS: Yeah, just well the art festival last week was quite a success. I guess most of the artists that were there...they walked away happy. And the people who did—were in attendance to view the festival and the showing of the art there—I guess they were also pleased with the festival. This week I made...I happened to go with a friend down to the **Six Nations** reserve this week. And we went down to see some people regarding our...his **confederacy passport** which is recognition of his sovereign citizenship with the **Ongweoweh Council** of the **longhouse people**. And we are able to pick that up from the secretary to the **Onondaga longhouse** over the week.

And I guess in the...in the news this week, one of the pressing issues that I came about, that I viewed, was the jury selection at **Oka** has finally ended. It ended on April the 30th. They were finally able to swear in the jurors, the 12 jurors required, for the case against 39 **Mohawks** that were involved in the 1990 **Oka crisis**. They say it was one of the longest jury selection

processes in Canadian history. And it was after a grueling two months that produced only four jurors in this trial that were...and eight people were selected at virtually the last moment. Only six potential jurors out of the 2,500 who were summoned originally were left. All the others except the chosen eight men and four women had been either excused for personal or professional reasons or rejected because their impartiality was in question.

So many members of the legal community in **Montreal** were convinced a jury could never be put together because too many **Montrealers** had formed opinions on the events of the violent summer two years ago. So that comes from the **Toronto Star**. So they finally...I guess they're going to be sitting down and the trial will begin. I'm not sure exactly when it starts. I don't have the information on that. But it will...it is expected to last at least four months. So we'll be watching carefully over the course of the summer, you know, what happens with the 39 defendants. As I understand it, some of the charges will be dropped but some of them will stick. You know, like, inciting riot, conspiracy to riot, and maybe something around deadly weapons...possession of deadly firearms or something like that. So that was one news item that caught my eye.

This week I was able to go out to the **Oneida** reserve. Out there they call it the **Onyota'a:ka**, which is **People of the Standing Stone**. And I was out there visiting **Howard Elijah**, who is secretary for the **Chief's Council of the Oneida Nation**. And that was on Thursday, and yesterday I was able to visit with **Chief Al Day** who is chief of the elective system of government—Onyota'a:ka. So when I went to visit Howard Elijah, we went and did the visit outside the log schoolhouse that's out there which is the [to be translated]—learning centre—which is a school learning centre where the Oneida Nation has taken control of their education back into their hands. And this is one thing that Native people have, for a long time, wanted to do. They've been wanting to get equality in education for their children. And equality in education is not something where my children are educated the same as a non-native children are educated. We believe that equality is for me to be able to educate my children the way I want them educated and respect the way the non-native people educate their children—that's true equality.

And so in practice, what the Onyota'a:ka Nation has done is they have taken back control of their education and they are, you know, collectively showing that they have a way of educating their children based on **Creation**, based on the four seasons. And they're exercising for their people freedom of choice so that families have the choice to educate their children either within the elective system, which is the **Standing Stone School**, or the Onyota'a:ka [to be translated] learning centre. So it's really a good...it works well...I've been to...when we had **David Suzuki** come visit the **London** area, he was welcomed into the [to be translated] and their condolence ceremony was performed in his honour. And it was done by the traditional council with the elective council representatives there, as well as the principal of the Standing Stone School, **Judy Rubin**, she was also in attendance. So it's really good to see that there's a spirit of cooperation. It's kind of really tying and bringing together a faction of...different factions of Onyota'a:ka people who for some time not long ago were at odds with each other. And so with the spirit of cooperation now in existence, and holding firm, it's really good to see. We thought

that it was a good time to talk to them about self-government, to talk to them about how the administration of the reserve takes place. In the eyes of the traditional council, the nation council, the chief's council, and in the eyes of the elective council, band council. So we were able to talk with Chief...or talk with Howard Elijah and Chief Day. So we won't be able to feature both of them together today—we'll just...we have some tape of our conversations with Howard Elijah that we will be hearing today. And next week, we'll have some...the other conversation that we had with Chief Day.

So I'd just like to, you know, say that it was a very informative session for me, it was very educational, I learned a lot. I'm always amazed, like, when you walk into a place where it's... where there's a steep history of tradition and it's steeped in tradition, the way it is out at Oneida. You walk in with an open mind, you know, the things that you can learn. And out there, we were listening, you could hear the birds singing, you could hear the nature...you could hear all Creation all around you, and it was almost like it was an agreement with the words that Howard was sharing with me that day. And I'd just like to add that because it certainly added to the moment. But we're gonna take a music break right now. We're going to listen to "**The Priests of the Golden Bull**" from **Buffy Sainte-Marie** and her new album entitled ***Coincidence and Likely Stories*** here on Smoke Signals.