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Former First Nations chief issues warning to city

Posted 15 hours ago

The man who was the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations for most of the 1990s had some dire words of warning for Brantford.

Ovide Mercredi filed an affidavit from Winnipeg as part of the defence against Brantford's request for an injunction against native protesters.

He recounted his experience during Oka, where natives and non-natives clashed over land issues and the army was called in.

"I strongly believe that if the police or army are called in against the Mohawk people for a second time, this will hugely prejudice any chance of reconciliation between aboriginal people and Canadian society," Mercredi's statement says.

"Once this anger and distrust is unleashed, it will not be easily halted. I am certain that aboriginal people across Canada will view such an approach in Brantford as provocation and as an affront to all aboriginal people, and will feel compelled to take action in support of the Haudenosaunee."

He also said Canadian First Nations are angry and ready to fight for their aboriginal rights.

While he believed protests during the National Aboriginal Day of Action would be peaceful, Mercredi invoked a serious warning.

"If an injunction is issued in Brantford in these circumstances, I have grave doubts that the peace will hold. Moreover, I think it is important for the court to understand that organized groups, institutions and leaders with aboriginal nations will not ... have the authority to control the actions of the individual members of their communities.

"An injunction employed to restrain the exercise and assertion of aboriginal rights not only threatens the public peace and safety but fundamentally undermines the rule of law."

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