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# Mohawk Council of Kanesatake

## Office of the Grand Chief

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To whom this may concern:

The Mohawk Council of Kanesatake was recently informed that an armored personnel Carrier known as the AVGP Cougar is to be used as a symbol of respect and honor to the veterans of WWII, although this very same vehicle was never used in that conflict but was used instead against my people when we stood up for our land rights during the Oka crisis of 1990.

Many of us in Kanesatake still endure the memories of that summer almost 30 years ago and the effects of the human rights abuses our people suffered at the hands of Provincial and federal forces that are still apparent in our daily lives today.

When the Canadian armed forces encircled our community with the help of the AVGP Cougar and closed in, it sent shock waves throughout First Nations territories, as the fear of a wider armed conflict could become a reality and throw us all in an uncertain future as a free society, let alone the image of force being used to further suppress the anger and frustration of First Nation people.

As per the information given us, the Cougar is to be used to specifically honor the 8<sup>th</sup> Hussars regiment of WWII that fought and died to free Italy of German occupation. As it turns out my great uncle Adelard Simon was one of the few soldiers of that conflict to survive both Dieppe and Normandy then come home. His cousin Henry Vincent was not so lucky as he was killed by a booby-trapped corpse and buried in Northern Italy.

I think a more fitting symbol to honor those veterans would be one of peace or one that reflect the old Canadian saying "**Never again**". And may I go as far as to suggest a sculpture with the symbol of Iwo Jima in mind but instead of soldiers propping up a flag, it could be a giant poppy with "**never again on foreign or domestic soil**" carved in its base, as well as one feather on the helmet or bonnet of one of the sculpted soldiers of the 8th Hussars.

This I think my great uncles would be proud to stand beside both the symbol and their brother Warriors as well as recognizing it as a good symbol of reconciliation in this country.

In closing, I know your intentions were honorable but sometimes we need advice on such things, as peace and reconciliation are not endeavors born of a single mind but must come from an environment of respect and inclusiveness, as well as the sharing of a possible common directions.

Sken:nen (peace),

Grand Chief Serge Otsi Simon

C.c: Harjiit Sajjan, Minister of Defence  
Roger Augustine, AFN Regional Chief, NB  
Ghislain Picard, AFN Regional Chief, QC  
Honourable Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations