

KEWEENAW BAY INDIAN COMMUNITY

2016 TRIBAL COUNCIL

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On October 20, 2016, the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, a federally recognized Indian Tribe, was notified by the Michigan Attorney General's Office that criminal warrants were issued for two of its members and former employees for alleged felony violations of the Michigan Tobacco Products Tax Act. The warrants are based on Michigan State Police's wrongful seizure of tobacco products on December 11, 2015. The seized products included tobacco products, a pickup truck and trailer, all owned by the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community. The two men were KBIC employees at the time of the seizure and were transporting cigarettes which were manufactured in Indian Country, were intended to be sold in Indian Country, and were illegally seized within the ceded home territory of the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community.

This was the first of three wrongful seizures by the State of Michigan. KBIC has taken actions to protect its sovereignty and its members by filing a civil complaint in the Federal Court in the Western District of Michigan regarding these seizures and Michigan's application of sales and use tax on KBIC and its members.

KBIC takes its duty to provide for the welfare of its members seriously. Michigan has now resorted to threatening incarceration against employees and members of KBIC for KBIC's exercise of its sovereignty. It is due to this and other reasons that for now, KBIC will be selling tobacco which bears a Michigan tax stamp.

It should be known that KBIC is not giving up – in fact, they are fighting back with full-force. KBIC has begun to prepare to manufacture and sell its own cigarettes in Indian Country, on the L'Anse Reservation and on KBIC's trust lands. The revenues raised from these sales will be used to provide benefits to KBIC members. KBIC will not be coerced into paying state taxes by Michigan's strong-armed prosecution of KBIC's members. KBIC and its leaders will do what they can to protect its sovereignty and its people.

LAKE SUPERIOR BAND OF CHIPPEWA INDIANS

"Home of the Midnight Two-Step Championship"