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Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Young Girls on
Tuscarora Reservation
(by Niagara Falls Reporter)

Buffalo attorney Kendra Winkelstein resigned as legal counsel to the ruling clique of the **Tuscarora Nation** last week following allegations of the **systematic sexual abuse of young girls on the reservation by individuals with strong ties to the Tuscarora leadership**. Winkelstein, who has represented tribal clerk Leo Henry, Neil Patterson Sr. and Neil Patterson Jr. for the past 18 years, told the *Niagara Falls Reporter* that the reasons behind her resignation were "personal." She declined comment when asked whether she is now talking with agents of the federal government or any other law enforcement agencies. A spokeswoman for the Buffalo FBI office would neither confirm nor deny that Henry and the Pattersons are under investigation. For Henry and the Pattersons, Winkelstein's resignation is potentially devastating, as Winkelstein has been the public face of the former "Gang of Four" to local, state and federal bureaucracies like the Niagara County Sheriff's Department, the New York Power Authority, the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Environmental Protection Agency. She has been a key negotiator for the Tuscarora leadership, and has served as their representative in eviction proceedings and other highly criticized procedures undertaken by Henry and the Pattersons. Speculation about Winkelstein's resignation was rampant on the reservation last week.

A chair's got four legs, but you kick one out from under it and the whole thing falls down," one Tuscarora told the *Reporter*. Without the thin veneer of legality Winkelstein provided, it seems unlikely that government agencies will continue to do business with a regime responsible for basic human rights violations, including the denial of electrical service and medical treatment, the hijacking of \$12.5 million received by the Tuscaroras over the past six years under the Power Authority's relicensing agreement, and an **alleged pattern of ongoing sexual abuse under which the parents of victimized children were threatened with the loss of their homes and land should they choose to go to authorities**. Because of confidentiality and ethical standards, Dougherty said he could not give the names of the women, but said they all told fundamentally the same story.

A powerful Tuscarora man, related by blood to at least one of those currently sitting on the ruling clique, **raped and abused** the women when they were **young girls between the ages of 11 and 16**, he said. "We're talking about an evil man," Dougherty said. "It's kind of surprising no one's shot him yet." In fact, Dougherty said, the father of one of the girls in question had to be physically restrained after he took off after the alleged perpetrator with a shotgun. "He was lucky that day, and he's stayed lucky."

The women waited years before coming forward with their allegations, because of the perpetrator's close ties to those in the Tuscarora government, Dougherty added. "They didn't say anything out of fear," he said. "Fear that they would be removed from the rolls, that their parents would be removed from the rolls, losing their property, or not having the ability to buy property."

More recently, **allegations of repeated incidents of child molestation have surfaced at the Tuscarora Health Clinic**, and the situation is considered so grave that a meeting was held for clinic workers in September where they were instructed about what to say should anyone ask them about the situation. **Numerous sources on the reservation said last week that the case involves multiple victims and a former worker at the clinic** -- related by blood to the suspect in the earlier case and to the member of the ruling clique as well -- who was quietly removed from his position last month. **According to the sources, the tribal leadership is deliberately conducting a coverup of what went on at the clinic, to the point of enlisting one powerful Clan Mother to warn the victims and their families of the dire consequences they might face should they speak out about what happened.**