Hello, everyone. Nya:weh sgeno. I hope that everyone enjoyed a wonderful Easter weekend.

As I reported over the weekend, an employee of our Sanitation department in Allegany recently tested positive for COVID-19 and are currently in quarantine at their home as directed by the Cattaraugus County Department of Health.
I am happy to report that two of the employee’s immediate family members were tested, and those tests have come back **negative**, meaning the family members do not have the virus. This is wonderful news and we continue to wish our employee a quick and safe recovery.

That being said, we must all remember to remain extremely vigilant in doing what we can to prevent the spread of the virus within our community.

First and foremost, that means staying home and avoiding all unnecessary travel AND continuing to practice social distancing. I cannot stress these measures enough.

With restaurants and bars being closed, we have heard reports of parties and large gatherings in both Allegany and Cattaraugus. This behavior needs to stop.
Our Nation leadership is pleading with our members to not congregate.

We all understand the desire to gather with family and friends, but you must understand that doing so during this ongoing pandemic only presents a serious risk to yourselves and to our entire community. This virus can be spread even by those who show no symptoms. It only takes one person within a group to start a chain reaction that can have drastic consequences.

To further emphasize this point, I enacted an Executive Stay at Home order for all Seneca territories. The order directs residents to remain home other than for essential services and travel. This will remain in effect until further notice. I hope everyone will abide by this order and remain home as a public safety measure.

Please, let’s all do our part to keep the Seneca Nation safe and healthy. The more we stay apart now, hopefully the sooner we will all be able to get together later.
Keeping our territories safe also includes thinking about how we attract outside visitors to the territories.

Last week, there was a gas price war in Allegany. This created unwanted and unwarranted community hazards by drawing an extraordinarily large volume of traffic to the territory.

We are currently operating under a State of Emergency. As such, I am asking all business owners on both territories, to conform to appropriate pricing guidelines. Please set prices at the rate established by the Seneca One-Stops. This will not only help to decrease capacity concerns and prevent the spread of the virus within our territories, but it will also ensure that our Nation-owned enterprises are able to generate important revenue at a time when they are our only viable source.

I thank our business owners in advance for your cooperation with this directive.
Our April Council meeting was held this past weekend, and was closed to the public for health and safety concerns. We appreciate your understanding.

If anyone has questions or comments regarding the April Council meeting, you may submit them by email to Councillors and Executives, and they will be answered.

The administration is currently looking at options to safely hold our May Council session. Specifically, we are exploring ways that our people will be able to safely and securely interact with the meeting, while keeping that information within our Seneca community. Our government works for the benefit of the Seneca people, and we know that it is important to have your voice heard.

The Nation will also continue to provide important information to our members through various channels. The Seneca Nation Coronavirus Response Hub website
can be reached by visiting www.SNI.org. A special edition of the Nation newsletter will also be coming out soon.

You can also check the Seneca Media Facebook page or YouTube channel, the Nation Newsletter site – www.SNINEWS.org, and WGWE for regular updates.

While we continue to actively and aggressively engage in a strong COVID-19 response on our territories, we are also looking forward at re-opening our Seneca economy.

Plans are currently being developed for recalling Nation workers and re-opening our businesses when the situation allows. We cannot and will not act too hastily, because we do not want to risk putting our people in harm’s way. However, we do want to be prepared to again generate economic activity.
I cannot say enough about the hardworking members of our Seneca Nation workforce. Your patience, understanding and commitment during this unique situation has been phenomenal. You continue to make all of us incredibly proud.

We know that these have been trying times, and we are going to make every effort to return our operations to normal as quickly and as safely as we possibly can.

If this pandemic has taught us anything, I hope it is to appreciate how fortunate we are to have the community we have. None of this has been easy. Many of our brothers and sisters across Indian Country have experienced incredibly difficult consequences within their communities. Our hearts go out to them, as we strengthen our resolve to keep our people and our territories as safe as possible.
Adversity shows our true character, as Seneca individuals and as a Nation.

Our ancestors struggled and persevered to build the Seneca Nation into what it is today. I believe I speak for all of my colleagues in the Nation government when I say that we are a Nation of remarkable strength, and we are all going to get through this period together.

Stay safe, stay connected, and please continue to look out for one another. Nya:weh