

Alcohol referendum scheduled at Six Nations

By Paula Hill

Matt Jamieson and Nicole Kohoko from the Economic Development office made a presentation to the Six Nations Elected Council advising that information sessions will commence the week of November 11, 2014 to educate the community on the opportunity that exists for Six Nations to become majority owner of a brewery with IPA Enterprises Inc., of Waterloo.

The Ohsweken waterline would be extended to accommodate this business. The brewery is proposed to be located in the Oneida Business Park at the end of Fourth Line Road.

As a part of the process, the community will also be asked to consider whether they would like Six Nations Elected Council to assume responsibility for regulating alcohol sales on reserve. Jamieson advised that Kahnawake has provided their regulations pertaining to alcohol sales on reserve, and this has been used

as a reference tool for Six Nations thus far.

Following the community consultation process, a referendum will be held to gather opinion on the topic. The referendum will take place on Saturday, January 17, 2015 at the Six Nations Community Hall.

Community members will be allowed to participate in having their voice heard through several mediums, including attending in person at the polling station, or through the internet and by telephone.

Jamieson advised that they are looking at unique new technology that would make all of these options available for those wishing to participate in the referendum.

Jamieson presented some background information. He stated in his presentation and it is listed on the Alcohol Referendum portion of Six Nations Council's website that, "Contrary to popular belief, Six Nations has not officially been deemed a

'Dry Community.'

"Up until 1958 it was considered illegal for an "Indian" to purchase or be in possession of alcohol, on or off reserve. In 1958 the Governor in Council issued a proclamation that states that all "Indians" in Ontario could legally purchase, possess and consume alcohol in accordance with the laws of Ontario off reserve the same as any other citizen.

"A Six Nations community referendum was held in 1959 to decide whether community members should be allowed to possess alcohol within the community. The decision was passed that alcohol would be permitted.

"In 1988, A Six Nations Elected Council Resolution states that a Community Referendum be held on May 7, 1988 to determine whether liquor should be sold or supplied at the Six Nations Veterans Hall, Community Hall and Arena. On May 3, 1988 a Council Resolution rescinded the

Resolution to hold a Community Referendum, in a 7-6 vote, thus a Referendum was not held."

Police Chief Glenn Lickers states that currently, people who seek permits to sell alcohol for special occasions on-reserve often get conflicting messages from Caledonia, Hagersville and Brantford as to which office has authority to issue permits for our territory. He states that "it would be nice to have that clarification" as to who has authority to issue permits.

"If it's Band Council, that's fine. At least we would know."

Chief Lickers sees this initiative as achievable if the community chooses to proceed. Anyone contravening the regulations could be charged under provincial liquor licensing laws. But he states that he has asked that Council pose this question to the Crown Attorney should there be any conflict for prosecution.