

Six Nations makes Onondaga nervous with land purchases

by Paul Barnsley

ONONDAGA - Reeve Mabel Dougherty is angry because Six Nations has purchased 170.9 acres of land in Onondaga.

"It's reverse discrimination. We can't buy property on the reserve, but they can buy land outside. They don't pay taxes. The Brant County Board of Education won't reduce our levy. We'll have to pick up the cost," she said.

The education tax in Brant County is 60% of the property tax. Last year school boards received over \$2,000 from this property.

"I've supported Natives before - and I don't want a confrontation - but this is unfair. We're being taken advantage of," Dougherty added.

Six Nations Land Research director, Phil Monture, says "We're entitled to make these purchases. We're buying land that we claim as our own, anyway. If Mabel's mad about losing tax money she has to ask herself what were they doing taxing land that wasn't theirs in the first place."

Monture confirmed the Dyjach farm had been acquired by Six Nations. He said the land is not part of the reserve as yet because Six Nations is allowing Stan Dyjach to stay on the land one more year, get a crop in and use the profits to find a new

home.

Band Council purchased the land from the mortgage holder, Income Trust Co. of Hamilton,

"We're entitled to make these purchases. We're buying land that we claim as our own, anyway. If Mabel's mad about losing tax money she has to ask herself what were they doing taxing land that wasn't theirs in the first place."

who foreclosed on the land a year ago. Council's offer to purchase was made last October.

Monture says the purchase was a good deal for Six Nations. The purchase price was \$400,000. Monture says the buildings on the land are worth more than that. He estimates the total worth of the property at close to \$800,000.

"It was a case of a family getting involved in a dispute over an estate. When the court orders came down we made an offer to purchase," Monture said.

Past land acquisitions by Six Nations in Onondaga Township have prompted angry response from residents there. Mabel Dougherty, as reeve, led the criticism. Close to \$5,000 in

taxes were collected on that property last year. That revenue will not be available in the future because Six Nations is exempt from paying property

taxes.

Nonetheless, Reeve Dougherty has also taken advantage of the

Native tax exempt law.

The TEKA has learned Reeve Dougherty has purchased gas on Six Nations territory, using her signature on her husband's tax exempt card, thus avoiding the payment of taxes. Under Bill C-31, Grahame Dougherty has a tax exempt card, but not his spouse Reeve Dougherty.

According to the Brantford Crown Attorney's office the use of another person's tax exempt card would fall under Part 10, section 403 of the criminal code which states, "anyone who fraudulently personates a person to obtain a property" is guilty of personation. The maximum sentence for a person convicted of personation under \$1000 dollars is 2 years in jail.