

# Brant CAS confusing community, says child welfare working group

By Chase Jarrett  
Writer

Confusion continues to surround whether or not the Brant Children's Aid Society has been ordered off Six Nations.

And organizers of a band council working group are charging the Brant CAS employees are causing the confusion.

Child Welfare Services Project Coordinator Barb General and consultant Tom Goff, said the Brant CAS workers are "mixing up issues" over their removal and the community has now been left misinformed.

Goff said "their comments are full of hot air."

"Bottom line here is: yeah, you want to see the CAS out of the picture, but asking them to leave the space they occupy on the reserve is not that (getting CAS out of the picture)," said Goff. "You can't kick (CAS) out. They still have to do the protection work. But you don't have to allow them to do that from a location on reserve. And it's those two

things that get confused."

Both Goff and General are part of a band council mandated working group whose goal is to implement a child welfare service with provincial designation on Six Nations. Success means being able to service not only Six Nations children, but all native children in Brant County, they said.

But the two became alarmed earlier this month at a Confederacy Council meeting (Jan. 4).

General says it was evident not all Confederacy Chiefs had a clear grasp of what removing Brant CAS from reserve offices really meant and that it has nothing to do with a transition plan.

Onondaga chiefs Pete Skye and Toby Williams voiced concerns regarding liability, whether HCCC could be sued if a child was placed in danger with Brant CAS absent from the territory, and also whether or not children would be safe with missing Brant CAS services.

But General said while Brant

CAS will be off reserve, they are still responsible for child welfare services until a Six Nations run organization is completely up and running.

She explained, then, the transition plan kicks in. "Somebody's been feeding (chiefs) misinformation in regards to that. The clanmothers fully understand that (Brant CAS) still have to come on reserve for their services," said General. "It sounds like (Confederacy Chiefs) don't have the information."

General has asked for a presentation for the next Confederacy Council meeting in February.

General added that moving Brant CAS off of the territory has nothing to do with the actual transition process—transition from a Brant run CAS to a Six Nations service comes much later but preparations have begun.

"We're looking to hire a director now, and the admin team in the next few months. They're going to be doing all of that. Setting up

the board, looking at where we're actually going to be located—all the different logistics in regards to really establishing that organization," she said.

She said a transition plan will be needed once the outline for Six Nations own service, O Gwa deni:deo, "Taking care of our own" is complete, provincially mandated, and up and running.

General said O Gwa deni:deo, while kick started through band council mandates, will operate as in independent organization.

"This whole process was initiated under band council and its funded by the province. But there's been a BCR - based on research - that the community wants it to be an independent organization separate from Band Council," she said.

"That's another misunderstanding by the chiefs and some of the clanmothers: They think it's going to be run under council and it's not. It's going to be a separate organization just like Ganohkwasra."

Goff said that once the organization is up and running, Brant CAS will stop taking on new cases which will instead be funneled to O Gwa deni:deo—at that point the transition process will begin.

"What we'll have is a transition period under which the active case files that the CAS is responsible for will come over (to O Gwa deni:deo)—slowly, gradually, as the capacity over here is built up to handle that," he said.

General said another reason Brant CAS and case workers on Six Nations are resisting the process is because when O Gwa deni:deo does get started, current case workers will have to compete for jobs.

"I think that's another issue that keeps coming up. We're not going to hire people to the same jobs if people are complaining about them and the work that they do. So we're going to make them compete."

Goff said some case workers will most likely not be rehired under the new organi-

zation because they don't perform well, or the community has complained.

General said that Brant CAS's last ditch efforts to work with clanmothers is not enough. "The model we have come up with is going to be inclusive of working with clanmothers. Brant CAS had 42 years - in 1971 they said you can come on the reserve and have an office here - for 42 years they had an opportunity work with the chiefs and clanmothers. They haven't.

"Now at the eleventh hour they want it. That's what Andy (Koster, Brant CAS director) and Sally (Rivers, aboriginal services director) were doing a few meetings ago; begging for forgiveness, for their oversight, but we're saying "no." This is what the community wants. They want culture integrated and they want clanmothers involved in that process.

"You have to remember all this pushing for them to leave is not just based on certain individuals. It's based on community input."