

Waste incineration expert warns Six Nations

By Jen Mt. Pleasant

SIX NATIONS - It is said that history repeats itself yet often no one seems to notice and the mistakes tend to happen time and time again. Grassy Narrows First Nation is located near Dryden, Ontario in northwestern Ontario. In 1962, Dryden Chemicals, a pulp and paper mills company began dumping an estimated ten metric tonnes of mercury into the English-Wabigoon River, which contaminated the water, soil, fish and wild game. Many residents became sick with Minamata disease which is caused by severe mercury poisoning.

This past winter, Neil Young went on a Canada wide tour, performing concerts in various cities to help raise awareness and funds which went to the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation in Alberta. The ACFN have been fighting the oil companies who have established projects near the first nation. Tar sands have destroyed the land and the environment



Dr. Paul Connett says all forms of incineration produce health hazards.

and community members are now getting sick with cancers and other diseases.

One scientist warns that Six Nations may be the latest native community facing toxic emissions if Six Nations Elected Council signs the deal with incinerator operator John Kearns of Kearns International.

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recently spoke with Dr. Paul Connett, a retired university professor who taught Chemistry at St. Lawrence University in Canton, New York for 23 years and has spent 29 years researching the issue of waste management. His research and activism has now taken him to 49 states in the United States, 7 provinces in Canada and 62 other countries world-

wide to help fight waste incineration.

Dr. Connett explained the effects of dangerous chemicals that get released into the air via waste incinerators, including the one that is being operated at the Six Nations Landfill Site. These toxic chemicals that get into the air are known as dioxins, said Connett. Asked to describe how dioxins affect the body, Connett explained, "Animals accumulate dioxins that come out of the stack of an incinerator. They get dispersed but eventually the particles and the gases fall to Earth and they go on to the vegetation. They go onto the grass. They go onto the soil. And the animals eat that grass. So if you got sheep, goats, cows, chickens, or pigs then they re-concentrate the dioxins into their bodies. And it's pretty devastating. Animals re-concentrate the dioxins including wild game such as beaver and deer."

Connett warned, "Furthermore, when we eat the animals, the diox-

ins go into our body. We can't get rid of them. Men can never get rid of them over a lifetime. But women can get rid of dioxins by having a baby. When a woman has a baby, the dioxins in her body fat are going to migrate to the fetus."

Through experience, Dr. Connett has seen other companies try and sell native communities waste incinerators because federal and environmental rules do not apply to first nations. "The native territories are not governed by the federal environmental laws. We have seen this happen all over the United States. I've seen them trying to build incinerators on the Native lands near Seattle, Washington. I lived near Massena, near Akwesasne and nearly every day there was some company coming through proposing a magic machine for the simple reason they don't have to meet the same regulatory requirements as they do off reserve. So that's what you (Six Nations) are seeing right now. If you're

interested in protecting the environment, waste incineration is the worst way to."

According to Six Nations Elected Chief Ava Hill, "We have to do something with the garbage back there (at the landfill site), we can't just keep burying it." If SNEC sign the final agreement with Kearns, they will pay him just shy of 4 million dollars for a brand new machine. Dr. Connett offered a few suggestions as to how that money could be better spent, "That money can be far better spent on waste diversion through recycling, reuse, composting, waste reduction initiatives and economic incentives e.g. pay by bag system - as being done in dozens of communities around the world. The Kearns disintegrator is not sustainable."

Dr. Connett has offered to come to Six Nations in August at no cost to the community, to debate the issue with John