

New group proposes native radio station

OHSWEKEN — Another group hopes to start a radio station for the Six Nations and New Credit reserves.

Grand River Communications Society is putting together a plan for a low-power FM station that would broadcast 18 hours a day in native languages.

Six Nations and New Credit, with their 13,000 residents, are the only major reserves in Canada without their own radio station, said Gary Farmer, an Indian actor and radio project spokesman.

Although details are far from complete, Mr. Farmer said the society would like to start a non-profit

radio station similar to university radio stations.

He said a previous group, which called itself First Nations Communications Society and had council's support, has abandoned its bid to start a station.

Mr. Farmer said his group will seek government support for the first five years.

He could not say how much it would cost to start a station.

Non-profit radio can get along with little money, he said. A fully-equipped station might cost \$300,000.

The station would broadcast from a 100-foot tower to be built at Ohsweken. Its 50-watt signal would be heard on the two reserves and in Caledonia, Hagersville and parts of Brantford.

The station would operate from 6 a.m. to midnight in all reserve languages.

It would have local news, sports, music, drama, language lessons and programs about community problems.

The station would give the reserves a voice, helping preserve native languages, and would provide a service not given by other media, Mr. Farmer said.

The Expositor has cut back regional coverage, he said, and Radio Station CKPC "has never served this community."

Council withheld supporting the plan until it has proof that First Nations no longer intends to start a station.

Mr. Farmer said Grand River Communications Society includes

many people who formed the earlier group.

"I think communications on this reserve are long overdue. The sooner we can get on the air the better," Mr. Farmer said.

Plans call for the station to become self-supporting through advertisements and fundraising.

"If everybody gave \$10 we could support radio," Mr. Farmer said.

Fundraising will begin next month in Brantford with the Canadian premiere of Mr. Farmer's first film called Powwow Highway.

The film, which Mr. Farmer said received good reviews in Seattle and Los Angeles, concerns two natives who travel from Montana to Santa Fe to rescue a political activist.

MARCH

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Mr. Farmer said the Canadian premiere could raise \$10,000 for the radio station. However, negotiations with a Brantford theatre are not complete.

He said the \$3.2-million film won awards at the United States Film Festival in Utah and the American Indian Film Festival in San Francisco.

Mr. Farmer said the radio station would not compete with a 10-watt FM station which is getting under way on New Credit.

It also would not compete with a cable television system proposed by First Nations Cable, which is seeking federal permission to phase in cable service, including a community access channel.

A radio station can get along with minimum facilities, Mr. Farmer said.

Coun. John Peters said the station, instead of building an antenna, might broadcast from the water tower at Ohsweken