

Polytech, Mohawk College tight-lipped about negotiations

By Donna Duric and Chase Jarrett, Writers

Six Nations Polytechnic is contemplating a Brantford expansion and negotiations with Mohawk College for use of their Elgin St. campus are still ongoing.

Both parties have remained tight-lipped about the negotiations so far, though Six Nations Polytech (SNP) has been optimistic about the idea since early last year.

"We're in negotiations with Six Nations Polytechnic," said Mohawk College spokesperson Jay Robb. "Mohawk pulled all of our remaining programs out of Elgin last fall. So we've been in negotiations since then." He added that Mohawk College is "optimistic."

Mohawk College officials have been unable to clarify whether SNP would be leasing the campus or buying it

outright. In either case, there's the question of a \$500,000 mortgage still owing on the property to Brantford.

Ali Ghiassi, vice president general council of Mohawk College, who has been directly involved with negotiations, said Polytechnic is aware of the mortgage.

"You should note SNP is very much aware of the encumbrances on the land. They have a lawyer and a very sophisticated party. They're well aware of what comes with the land."

He said the mortgage can become payable depending on who buys the building. "It depends on what happens with the transaction. Under the mortgage if (the campus) remains post secondary education, the mortgage remains in place."

Ghiassi said the mortgage

is a tool on Brantford's part to make sure the building remains a school. "It's just a mortgage. It's not actually defined in terms of price. Should the property be sold for purposes other than post secondary education purposes, an amount would be payable based on fair market value."

But ultimately negotiations still must be made. "We're trying to understand the extent of the mortgage and put together a type of transaction whether it's a lease or an ownership that's agreeable."

The Elgin St. campus consists of two buildings and the popular Children's Safety Village, which is an independent non-profit organization.

SNP CEO/President Rebecca Jamieson told The Turtle Island News the mortgage has nothing to do with Six Nations.

"That's a mortgage between Mohawk college and the City of Brantford. That really doesn't have anything to do with us. That's a matter that Mohawk has to deal with."

Jamieson said Polytech won't have to pay the outstanding \$500,000 mortgage "as far as I know."

Whether the Six Nations school would lease the building or buy it outright is still unclear. "That's what we're discussing," she said. "I wish I could tell you more, but I can't."

With Mohawk College President Rob McIsaac leaving his post at the end of January, Jamieson said, "We hope to have some closure by then."

If not, she says, she trusts other executives at the college will continue to negotiate with Polytech in good faith. "He (McIsaac) has a

good team in place."

Currently the 130,000 square foot building is being examined for structural integrity.

The former Mohawk campus in Brantford is larger than Polytech, so the additional building space means opportunities for more programming for both native and non-native students alike, said Jamieson.

But even with expansion, Polytech will continue on-reserve programming.

Jamieson said they can't physically expand at Polytech's current location because Six Nations Band Council has designated the land behind the building for the construction of the proposed Kawennio/Gaweniyo private school, which currently operates out of the Iroquois Lacrosse Arena.

She said they didn't con-

sider asking band council to locate the KG school in another location.

"We could look at other areas in the community, I suppose, for expansion but when the Elgin Campus came up, it does have high-speed (Internet) capacity, which is something that we're looking for. That's one of the things that makes it very attractive to us."

She said Six Nations doesn't have the same level of service when it comes to high-speed Internet.

They also can't expand onto the large parcel of land in front of the building because it hosts a system of gas pipe systems that heat the school.

She said the Brantford campus has numerous amenities that Polytech doesn't have, such as a gymnasium and auditorium.