

Mother of Six Nations girl with cancer speaks out

By Donna Duric
Writer

"I was prepared to become a fugitive and run with my daughter."

That's how far a Six Nations mother was willing to go out of fear a court would order her daughter be seized after she was pulled out of chemotherapy this past summer in favour of alternative treatments for cancer.

"I lived in fear of losing her for so long. I was prepared to do anything to keep her. I had no fear of becoming a fugitive. I was going to run with her."

The mother and daughter, who cannot be identified due to a publication ban, were celebrating a court victory with about 100 community members at Polytechnic Sunday after a Brantford judge decided last week the girl was not a child in need of protection.

The mother spoke publicly Sunday evening for the first time about the harrowing journey she and her family have been on since her

daughter was diagnosed with cancer.

The 11-year-old girl had been diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia in August after her mother noticed something "off" about her daughter while she was playing lacrosse.

"She couldn't run for a sustained amount of time," said the mother. "She started getting stomach pains, leg pains, she'd run off the field after about 30 seconds. It started getting worse and worse. One day, she almost collapsed. A few days later, I noticed her not eating and sleeping a lot. She almost slept four days straight. Her legs were really weak."

That's when the mother took her daughter to McMaster Children's Hospital and received the devastating news that her daughter had acute lymphoblastic leukemia, a childhood cancer.

"(The doctor) blurted out like it was casual: 'I believe your daughter has cancer,'" she

said.

"From that moment, it was like a cloud, a fog, just come over me. I couldn't think. I was in disbelief. I said to him: 'I know ways to treat cancer.' And he just looked at me in disbelief."

The mother reluctantly agreed to start her daughter on her first round of chemo on Aug. 13, which doctors told her would provide her daughter with an 80 to 95 per cent survival rate.

While receiving treatment, her daughter experienced excruciating side effects and even caught an e-coli infection in the hospital.

"I hope no one ever has to see a child in the kind of pain I've seen her in. I knew I couldn't do that to her. It was too high a price to pay."

The mother eventually informed doctors she wanted to pull her daughter out of chemotherapy to try traditional and alternative approaches instead.

"The doctor was a little bit



A Six Nations girl is under the primary care of these three women who are helping her in her cancer battle. Alva Jamieson (left) is a traditional healer, Dr Karen Hill and Denise Maclean provides raw foods and juices. (Photo by Donna Duric)

upset," the mother said. "She had to struggle to maintain her composure; she convinced me my daughter had zero chance of survival if I left this hospital. I didn't pursue a debate with her. I knew they were going to call (child services) but I had no fear. I knew it was going to become a legal fight. I knew they were going to come at me with medical neglect."

She told doctors she was taking her daughter to Florida to

an alternative treatment centre called the Hippocrates Health Institute and was eventually discharged.

She said she set out for Florida a day earlier than anticipated because, "I knew they were going to try and stop me and they did."

A Brantford judge had placed an order calling for the family to remain in Ontario the day they left in mid-September.

The mother and daughter stayed at the Florida health

centre for three weeks where her daughter underwent a treatment regimen of raw food, supplements, laser therapy, positive thinking, and exercise.

Meanwhile, a legal case played out in Brantford after McMaster took Brant Child and Family Services to court for failing to intervene in the case.

A number of expert witnesses were paraded through the

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