

Clanmothers say no to alcohol regulations and brewery

By Donna Duric
Writer

A number of traditional women and clanmothers have suggested petitioning those who don't vote in order to tell Six Nations Economic Development they don't support its proposed brewery and alcohol regulation law here.

The suggestion came after a community meeting at OMSK Elementary School on Saturday where clanmothers voiced a firm 'no' to economic development's proposal to operate a brewery at Oneida Business Park and develop alcohol regulations here.

"We're against it," said clanmother Ruby Williams. "That don't belong to us. We're banned from that stuff. It's scary what they (economic development) want to do. It's against our religion. That's what they tell us in our Ganigonhi:oh. That's the first thing they'll preach to you is alcohol; what it does to your mind, what it can do to you, what it can do to families." She and other traditional followers said they will not be voting in the Jan. 17 referendum on the proposal because of their long-standing denial of the elected band council system.

"That's stepping outside the circle," said Williams. So the group of women, including Onondaga clanmother Gyaohao:se and police commission member Leanna Bomberry, suggested gathering comments from traditional community members and giving those comments to economic development to voice their opposition to the proposal.

"They're not thinking of our children and the children yet to come," said Gyaohao:se. "My mom and dad didn't drink and they were telling us all the time that isn't us."

Bomberry offered to facili-



Haudenosaunee clan mothers attended Six Nations Band Council's Economic Development's meeting on a proposed brewery and coming alcohol regulation referendum in January. (Photo by Donna Duric)

tate the gathering of traditional voices.

"The traditional people should come together and say, as a people, 'this is how many people say no' and send it to them in letter form. There's our numbers instead of using their forum because then you're not stepping outside the circle."

Bomberry told Six Nations Economic Development Community Planner Amy Lickers that traditional teachings advocate zero tolerance for alcohol consumption.

"Our traditions are very strict. In the Ganigonhi:oh, it says there is zero tolerance."

Lickers said the proposed alcohol law would only apply to people who do drink.

"Really, the regulation isn't set up to regulate someone like you - it's to regulate somebody that (drinks)," said Lickers. "People that choose to not drink ...won't have to worry about what the regulation says because they're not participating in that anyway. The people that are (drinking) need to do it in a way that's responsible and that they can be held accountable for their actions."

Lickers said if people didn't drink at all on Six Nations, they wouldn't need a regulation.

"If people decided to live in

a good way, we wouldn't need regulations for anything."

Six Nations could rake in about \$4 million a year and create around 150 new jobs if the community approves the operation of a beer brewery at Oneida Business Park.

The band also plans to hold a referendum in January on whether or not the community supports the regulation of alcohol sales and distribution on the territory.

The controversial proposal came after Matt Jamieson, director of Economic Development, met with Waterloo-based company IPA Enterprises two years ago in Toronto.

IPA is offering Six Nations a 90 per cent ownership stake in the enterprise, as well as \$2 million for a waterline expansion from Stoneridge to Oneida Business Park to enable the brewery operation.

Williams is adamant against allowing alcohol sales and distribution on the territory.

"Look what it's done to our reserve, all the tragedies that have happened; taking young people's lives...that's really scary what they want to do."

She told Lickers, "You guys (economic development) don't seem to know what 'no' means."

IPA owner Jim Brickman brushed off concerns that

alcoholism was an issue of specific concern to Six Nations.

"I have been reading as much as I can get my hands on," he said at Saturday's meeting. "I have to tell you, it's not any different than communities outside the reserve. Alcohol and drug abuse is an issue in all sort of communities. It's not specifically a re-

serve issue and whether there's a brewery or not there's still going to be alcohol (in the community)." Economic Development is asking the community to vote on five alcohol-related questions in the upcoming referendum:

1. Do you generally agree with the draft alcohol law?
 2. Do you agree with the regulated manufacturing and distribution of alcohol on Six Nations?
 3. Should Six Nations pursue the brewery opportunity to be located within Oneida business park?
 4. Do you agree with the regulated retail sale of alcohol on Six Nations?
 5. Do you agree with the regulated wholesale of alcohol on Six Nations?
- Lickers said their draft alcohol law is loosely based on one developed in Kahnawake but should be tailored to Six Nations.

"The regulation isn't set up for personal consumption, it's for sale and distribution within the community," said Lickers. Lickers said she's hoping to find a way to include the input of traditional community members who don't vote.

"This isn't the only time I've come across this challenge," she said. "I have approached the Confederacy on a number of different occasions and I have not been able to get onto the agenda. I have put my request in again."

She suggested developing a form for traditional community members that says, "I do not participate in voting and I support the decision of the Confederacy Council (whatever that decision may be)." Lickers added, "It has never been my intention to not include everybody's voice in the community."