

# Regional Director addresses Governance Act to Six Nation Council

By Marie-Lauren Gregoire

OHSWEKEN – John Donnelly, regional director general for INAC Ontario, spoke to councillors at a special Six Nations Band Council meeting last Wednesday morning about First Nations governance and impending changes to the Indian Act.

"My understanding is that the Minister of Indian Affairs is going ahead with changes to the Indian Act," said Chief Wellington Staats. "I thought John should explain this and what is going on."

Donnelly met with council for the yearly review and discussion of funding agreements from the Department of Indian Affairs and also explained the issue of governance.

"Minister Nault has not proscribed whether it's major changes to the Indian Act or a companion piece to the Indian Act, he has left that up for discussion," said Donnelly.

"Currently there are 200 pieces of litigation challenging the Indian Act, challenges in terms of equality, treatment, treatment of women. The Minister's concern was that unless we, Aboriginal leaders and Federal government, make changes or update those sections of the act that are being challenged, the courts will do it," said Donnelly.

He explained that the Indian Act, while recognizing First Nations governments as their own

entity, does not permit First Nations governance in the 21st Century.

Donnelly said that the Minister is very concerned about the relationships in the act between Band Council and the Minister.

"You, chief and council, are more responsible legally to the Minister rather than the people of

Six Nations," he said. "There is some concern that First Nations act as government rather than agents of the crown."

Donnelly explained the Minister's timeframe of three years and a consultation process involving Aboriginal leaders across the country.

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