

Public Library under wraps

By Marie-Lauren Gregoire

OHSWEKEN – Six Nations Public Library closed last week for renovations to the second floor of the Chiefswood Road building which will accommodate ten additional computers. The library is transforming the vacant second floor into a computer room, study hall and meeting room. Renovations are extensive and will take 8-10 weeks to complete during which time the library will be closed to the public.

Diana Doxtdator, Librarian, clarified the temporary library closure, "We're looking at 8-10 weeks and we're hoping it won't take any longer." The first floor of the library accommodates six computers but the library does not have adequate space on that floor for any more computers and the library will be receiving ten additional computers. "Our original intention for upstairs was a computer room. We've got ten more computers coming and no where to put them down here," explained Doxtdator. The library has the task of transforming a home into a library so the renovations will be extensive.

"This was originally built as a doctor's residence since the Lady Wellington Hospital. The challenge is to renovate a building that was built

into a house into an institution," said Doxtdator. Reconstruction will remove the walls of the upstairs bedrooms and the new wiring, upgraded hydro and new bathroom facilities will make a library study area. "We're doing more than cosmetic renovations," exclaimed Doxtdator. The renovation crew will have to gut the upstairs and tear down walls to affect this transformation as it requires more than paint and wallpaper.

The library board decided to close the library during the extensive renovations rather than keeping it open, even minimally, because of public safety concerns. "Based on health and safety with all the renovations going on upstairs, they're completely gutting the 2nd floor and with all the dust and the hydro having to be cut off... it was just simpler to close the library," explained

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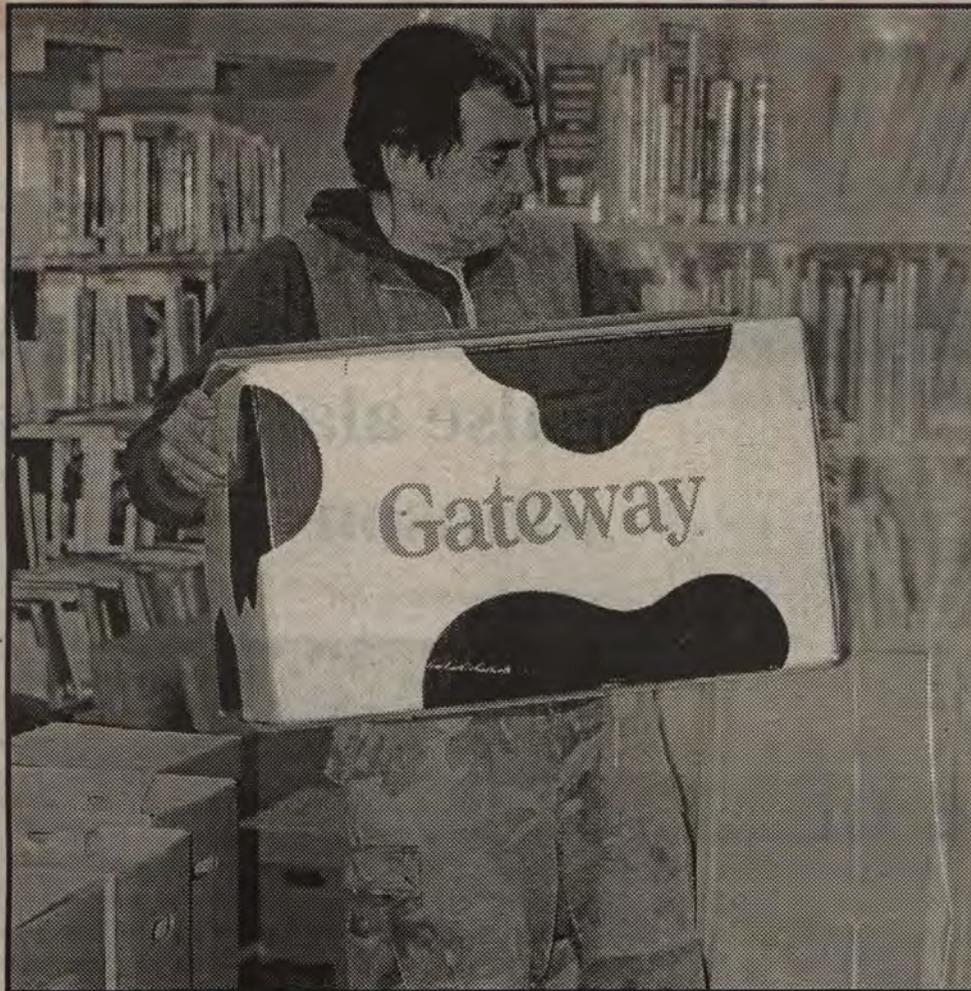
Doxtdator.

The library board received a grant for the renovations and the computers were donated by Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC). The library applied for the second hand computers and received ten pentium one computers that are "still a good grade of computer," said Doxtdator. As well as the heavy construction, rewiring and plumbing, the library will also require wall and floor coverings and furniture coordinated with the downstairs including 'ergonomically correct computer chairs.'

The library closes just two weeks before March break and will not be available to school kids until May. When asked why the library closed in the middle of the school year Doxtdator explained, "Our financial agreement meant we had to start March 1, 2001." The library has become a very important part of the community and the children rely on the library for research and information. "In our community, the concept that routine is good and healthy. They got used to it, the library being open, the computers being available and now they're not going to be. So that's why it was hard to make the decision knowing we had to start now," explained Doxtdator.

Ideally, Doxtdator would prefer the library closed for construction during the summer when the children are not at school and would not need the library for research. "We were hoping technically not to start till June. The heat would be off, we could have the door open, we could have the windows open. The demand wouldn't be there for the kids for school. But we were locked in by the contract," expressed Doxtdator.

The library is getting ten additional computers for educational purposes, "We've got education software on our computers," emphasized Doxtdator. She stressed that the computers assist the children in their educational pursuits. "I do anything to pro-



The Six Nations public library will be closed for 8-10 weeks. Jim Moses is pictured here moving boxes as the library is packed away and the shelving is wrapped with plastic.

mote reading," said Doxtdator and added that the computers encourage reading. The educational software programs include Arthur reading, Arthur math, Dr. Seuss stories and the encyclopedia. "We don't have games on our computers," exclaimed Doxtdator in response to parental concerns that children are 'playing' on the computers.

Doxtdator insists that children are learning on the computers, "I would not be able to give kids an Encyclopedia and ask them to sit and read it. But I'll put the encyclopedia on the computer and they'll sit and look

at it for a half hour because there's sound and images...so it's educational." The library is expanding its technological offering with the renovations and the additional computers. It will re-open in May with a new computer facility and an expanded study area. "We've got to bring this library and this community into the 21st century," believes Doxtdator.

The children who frequent the library and Doxtdator are disappointed in its' closure. There is a demand for the library services from school children and especially

the after school crowd. "There is definitely the demand here for a quiet study area. We've got a lot of kids that walk as compared with a number of years ago when all the kids were bussed. There is a demand right when school is out for a safe place for kids to come to," said Doxtdator.

There are alternatives for the public while the library is under construction. "Our card is honoured by Caledonia, Hagersville, Cayuga and New Credit. They can use our cards and go to those libraries so they're not cut off, as long as they have the transportation," explained Doxtdator. Brantford Public Library does not honour the Six Nations Public Library card anymore. Children are disappointed the library will be closed for the spring, as Doxtdator explained, but once the ice melts the recreational activities will bloom and children will be caught up in athletic pursuits.

Doxtdator will be a 'floating librarian' for the duration in London and Smithville as well as continuing her classroom visits, "I meet with the grade one class at I.L. Thomas, the grade three class at Emily C. General and the kindergarden class at O.M. Smith," said Doxtdator. She will also be attending workshops sponsored by the Ontario Library Service and taking her vacation during the library closure which will keep the library open for the summer months. "When we open in May we'll be open right through the summer," exclaims Doxtdator.

During the summer the library will offer its reading program and it will again be available for children as a safe study area. "I'm really glad that they consider our library a safe environment," said Doxtdator of the children that visit regularly. Barring complications, Doxtdator expects the library to open in early May, "We'll re-open May 7th and our opening will coincide with Community Awareness week so we're planning a library open house." As of last Friday the closed sign will be up for 8-10