

# Six Nations get RCMP presence

by Andrea Buma

OHSWEKEN - RCMP officer Jeff Cooper will spend the next year in the community, working out of the Six Nations police office in an arrangement known as "secondment" in police lingo.

Cooper is here in an attempt to improve the somewhat tarnished reputation of the RCMP in the Six Nations community.

Police Chief Glenn Lickers comments, "I don't want to open old wounds, but there have historically been many grievances and disagreements between the community and the RCMP. To the credit of the RCMP they brought in people at the Hamilton detachment that were more open to the idea of native policing. This initiative is possible because of the groundwork that has been laid, a few years ago we wouldn't even have considered it."

In fact, Six Nations police presented retiring RCMP Staff Sergeant Murray Wood with a special award during last month's community awareness week. Lickers says that Wood has been

a good friend to the Six Nations police, and was in charge of the native liaison program for Ontario.

"Sgt. Wood and people like him deserve a lot of credit for something like this taking off.

And Jeff himself has a lot to do with it. We have had three years to build a relationship with him," comments Lickers.

Cooper is a Six Nations band member who was raised off-

reserve. He has been serving as the First Nations Community Service Officer out of the Hamilton detachment for the past

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# Six Nations to get RCMP

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three years, and says he requested the position because "I never grew up with native culture so I'm still learning too. That's the reason that I was interested in this position."

Cooper has already spent 9 years with the RCMP. He spent his first five years in the drug section. A year of that was in Brantford, where he worked in a joint drug force as an undercover officer, buying drugs at the street level.

His next stint was a year in the federal enforcement section investigating fraud such as Unemployment Insurance and old age pension rip-offs. Cooper explains that there is always a way to beat the system. For example, people would get names from grave stones and collect benefits for deceased people by using fake I.D.

The last three years he has done double duty as an investigator in the customs and excise section, and the First Nations liaison officer.

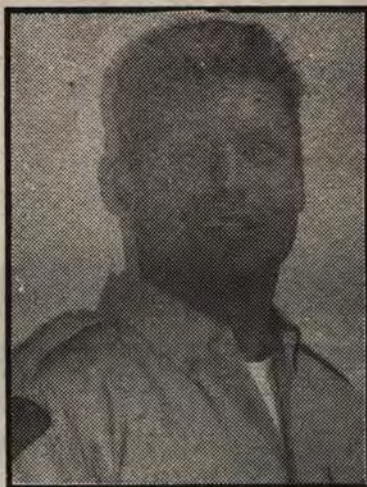
The year-long secondment with the Six Nations police will benefit Cooper as a police officer, giving him the opportunity to serve as a uniformed officer. He will have the opportunity to do ride-alongs with Six Nations officers. RCMP in Ontario customarily work in plain clothes, doing investigative duties.

Many people do not realize that the RCMP do have a federal policing mandate in Ontario communities. They are responsible to uphold federal statutes like drugs, customs/excise, immigration, commercial crime, and organized crime.

But Cooper stresses that the reason he is in the community is not to do any investigation. "We want to promote the functions of the RCMP, to let people know what we do. We want people to realize that every time we are in this community, its not always to investigate someone or make arrests. I am not here as an investigative tool."

The RCMP hope to be able to recruit Aboriginal candidates through Cooper's presence on the territory. There is a special native cadet program that pre-

pares First Nations members to enter the police academy. Six Nations' Dawn Johnson recently completed the program and left



*RCMP Officer  
Jeff Cooper*

for Saskatchewan June 1st to complete the same training as any other RCMP recruit.

Cooper will also be working

with Six Nations police to develop community crime-prevention programs. "Because we're national, we have a lot of resources available. This will give the local police more options."

Lickers agrees that Jeff will be able to provide valuable assistance in police initiatives. He admits that he expects that some people in the community will harbour suspicions that the RCMP is here as part of an undercover operation.

"If I had any doubts as to why Jeff was here, we wouldn't be a part of it. Its completely voluntary for both parties. Some trust has to be placed in the Six Nations police - we are here to serve the best interests of the community, and we wouldn't do anything to jeopardize that," cautions Lickers.

"We still don't want to see the Mounties on our territory."