

Six Nations Education Board meeting

by Denise Dicy

SIX NATIONS - The Six Nations Education Board (SNEB) met on December 14 and members discussed a variety of ongoing issues and reviewed relevant communiques.

The meeting began with a presentation by community member Rick Anderson.

Anderson, who is an education councillor at the Grand River Post-Secondary education office, made the Board aware of the willingness of Mike Balkwill to meet with the Board as a consultant.

Balkwill, said Anderson, has previously worked with a variety of community based organization to develop strategies to help them reach their objectives.

The presentation was brought to the Board as Anderson saw the potential of Balkwill's service being an asset in developing strategies in such areas as policy development, negotiations, and public relations.

Anderson explained the notion of developing strategies as identifying problem areas and determining possible courses to deal with potential difficulties as well as the problems that the Board has already run into.

He did point out that Balkwill does not know much about specific issues to Six Nations but this was received by the Board as an advantage in that there would be no preconceived bias-

es.

Concern over the cost of a consultant was raised by Beverly Longboat but Anderson stated that the first consultation would be free.

It was determined that the Board would set up a meeting to talk with Balkwill in the New Year and chairperson, A. Michelle Hill, expressed that she "appreciates the interest from the community."

Discussion then turned to an update on the attempt initiated by former superintendent of schools trainee, Claudine VanEvery-Albert, to co-ordinate a link-up between the various schools using the computerized bulletin board system.

The attempt has fallen through the cracks due to what Hill characterized as a lack of organization.

However, funds may still be available to establish the bulletin board hook-up with one school, said Vicki Thomas, who works out of the Community Education Project office, adding that VanEvery-Albert will be contacted to gage the interest in hooking J.C. Hill up with the computer link.

During the Board's meeting of Nov. 23rd, it was suggested that Hill meet with Doug Forbes, Regional Director for the Department of Indian Affairs' (DIA) Southern District Office, on the issue of re-establishing

the position of a director, which was formerly held by Rebecca Jamieson. Having followed that suggestion, Hill announced that during the November 29th meeting with Forbes he said he could promise funding until the end of the fiscal year for the amalgamated position of Director/Supervisor.

The salary for this three month position is set at \$17,002.50 and, if extended past March, would total \$68,010, including benefits gaged at 14%, for a year's pay.

Forbes' request for a job description for this position prompted board level discussion on the flexibility of the criteria for this position in that, according to Hill, there has been past criticism that qualifications for such positions were too restrictive for application from the community.

In that the position is to be contracted, the Board agreed that flexibility is to be considered and that experience, and not so much the number of degrees hanging on the wall, is to be a stronger qualifier.

The Board then discussed the hiring process. Ron Thomas suggested that the Board "learn from the past" and have some public people involved in the process as part of public accountability. Such a measure would be "partly to take the heat off the Board and to say to

the public that it [the Board] is yours."

Due to the fact that the position of Director/Supervisor is only being funded until the end of the fiscal, Phil Monture suggested that who ever is hired be put on a "three month probation period with extension subject to the availability of funding."

Thomas, however, expressed some doubt that someone with the type of credentials needed for the position would apply for a three month position. "It's a shot in the dark," he said.

Talking about shots... Alan Raslack, Program Services Manager for DIA's Southern District Office, has voiced support for recommending that service providers to Six Nations children (those employed as teachers, bus drivers and in any other manner whereby they are in contact with the children through the school/education scenario) be tested for Tuberculosis based on the advise of Dr. Roger Johnson, Regional Community Medical Specialist.

Even though it's only a recommendation at this point, for TB testing is not part of DIA's policy but an agenda for SNEB, Hill said that Raslack's position has brought the issue to "a successful conclusion."

In context of a question asked by Norman Jacobs at the last meeting as to whether the Board members still had the same objectives in mind, the Board examined the issue of a Treaty Based Agreement (TBA), its obtainability and the meaning of the phrase.

I don't think you're going to get a TBA, said Phil Monture. Keith Jamieson agreed that a TBA may be a long time in coming but held on to the possibility of putting the blocks in place to get there.

If we're going to get away from a TBA then we better go back to the community again, said Ron Thomas.

The meaning of the phrase "Treaty Based Agreement" was also looked at and various interpretations examined due to what Hill saw as a "confusion" of what treaty based means.

A TBA is signed ultimately by the Confederacy and the government of Canada, said Thomas. Hill, however, had interpreted TBA as an education agreement based on treaties with similar safeguards and considerations, but not the signing of a treaty.

In context of interpreting what is meant by the phrase, Monture suggested that the Board doesn't want to get stuck in one tunnel when there may be different avenues to open up in the future. A TBA may not warrant signing a new treaty, he said, but just extending and affirming what is already there.

"What did the community mean when they asked for treaty based?", questioned Hill before going on to the next item on the agenda, the Community Report.

The Community Report is overdue and won't get out until the New Year due to the trouble of co-ordinating the effort, although Luanne Hill-MacDonald is presently doing some preliminary work trying to pull the information together, reported Hill.

Hill then relayed communications from Raslack that dealt with the flow of funding from the elementary committee, which the Board now distributes.

Elementary schools are under the impression that their share of \$7,500 is to be sent directly to the schools as promised by Raslack, said Hill but in that there is no set process for such distribution under the Board, the decision was that the matter be referred back to the elementary committee to deal with.

The distribution of \$2,000 of scholarship funds has also been held up. The \$2,000, and maybe more, is available but not until March, reported Vicki Thomas who had been in contact with Raslack.

In that the funds should have already been distributed in October to students with high averages, it was recommended that the \$2,000 be taken from another account and reimbursed when the expected funds come in March.

With the deadline for submitting options for restructuring already past, the next step in the process is the forming of a selection committee. The process is, however, "back to square one for the selection committee," said Hill, as the "principals were very reluctant to name somebody" to sit on the committee as per the suggested method of forming the committee that was determined during the last Board meeting.

A public service announcement will be going out to the community requesting volunteers for this selection committee.