

# Elected Chief says authority has to come from people

By Donna Duric  
Writer

In a rare move, elected Chief Bill Montour said Idle No More has spurred him to consider putting aside the division between band council and the Confederacy Council.

The statement came as band council was fleshing out its plans on how to involve itself in the ongoing Idle No More movement, which started in protest to the Conservative government pushing through the omnibus Bill C-45.

"I think it's time we start looking beyond the (McIvor) court case of 1977 as being the authority (of Six Nations)," said Montour at Monday's Committee of the Whole meeting. "The authority, I think, has got to come from the people of this community. I don't want to be the architect of driving a wedge further into our community."

Council says it wants to be involved in this Friday's much-anticipated meeting

between Stephen Harper and the Assembly of First Nations but as of press time, no definitive plans were in place.

The Jan. 11 meeting, which will include Governor-General David Johnston, comes on the heels of the month-long, nationwide Idle No More movement and is set to involve First Nations leaders.

Idle No More grew from a series of teach-ins and protests held by a group of women from Saskatchewan concerned about Bill C-45. Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence began a hunger strike that coincided with Idle No More, saying she wouldn't eat until Harper agreed to a nation-to-nation treaty meeting between First Nations leaders and the Crown. She has since said she will eat after the Jan. 11 meeting takes place.

Councillor Roger Jonathan said the Jan. 11 meeting is meant for leadership only and called grassroots mem-

bers of Idle No More "foolish" for wanting to ensure the movement remained led by the people.

"When the Prime Minister said he wanted to meet,

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Elected Chief  
Bill Montour*

he's meeting with the leadership not any joe-blow off the street," said Jonathan. "There's got to be a way that this Idle No More is more in support of the leadership."

He criticized the community for not attending council meetings.

"I don't see people who are part of this in our community sitting in our audience (council chambers) listening to all the problems we do," said Jonathan. "Now all of a sudden they're going to start the grassroots thing to do with the leadership. I think that's pretty foolish in my view."

Councillor Ava Hill said all aboriginal people should be unified in the Idle No More movement.

"I think we should be looking at this from a perspective of unity," she said. "In fact that's something I posted on Facebook. I don't like the fact we seem to be divided. If we're going to get divided and start criticizing each other, which is what's happening, that's exactly what the government wants us to do - start fighting with each other."

She said there needs to be more communication on the suite of government bills making their way

through Senate, including Bill C-45.

Local Idle-No-More organizers have held teach-ins.

"I'm happy to see this people's movement but it's got to be done right and we can't start fighting with each other," said Hill. "We should all be promoting the whole perspective of unity." Montour took part in a Chiefs of Ontario conference call Monday afternoon to decide on a joint statement they would make regarding First Nations treaty rights and their relationship with the government. The statement late Monday afternoon discussed asserting First Nations treaty rights.

Councillor Helen Miller echoed Jonathan's sentiments by saying she was disappointed that First Nations leadership was being criticized by the movement. "I'm really disheartened that they're putting the chiefs and councils down like that," said Miller. "I'm sitting here thinking, 'I'm not going to go to any of these

rallies if all they think I'm there for is to get my picture taken."

"Yet at the same time they're standing here saying, 'what's council going to do about it,'" said Miller. "It's kind of hard to know what to do; if we try to take part in the movement, we're criticized. If we sit back and do nothing we're criticized, so what are we supposed to do? I don't know."

Montour said now is "an ideal time for us to start getting back together. If we start going off half-cocked, we're going to get ourselves in a big mess."

There was no word on how many people will be invited to be part of the AFN delegation meeting with Harper this Friday, or if grassroots citizens will also be taking part in the meeting. Idle No More members say they will continue to hold rallies and blockades after the AFN meets with Harper in their bid to assert First Nations treaty rights.