

INAC putting children's education at risk

*By Lynda Powless
Editor*

Six Nations council will be heading into a meeting with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) this week armed with facts and figures on how INAC is failing the

education of Six Nations children. Local consultant, Mary Jamieson, told council last Tuesday, INAC is "nickel and diming" Six Nations children over their education.

She said local programs such as

literacy and Grand River Employment and Training (GREAT) have been using their funding and pushing their mandates, "to bail out INAC. Their money is better spend on something else instead of bailing out INAC."

She said ICOR, an unofficial group of local education administrators, band employees and organization employees meets monthly to discuss educational problems at Six Nations.

"We are trying to deal with the poor service of education INAC is giving us."

She said most of the problems relate to a need to improve math, science and reading skills.

She said Social Development councillors in the school are trying to work one on one with students in the classroom, teaching basic

reading and math skills. She said the program costs \$325,000 with \$136,000 coming from Building Healthy Community funds. "That's money that could be better spent in the health area but is being spend on education."

She said dollars for training youth being funnelled through GREAT are being used to help supplement educational needs of children.

"Come September GREAT can't supply those funds anymore. There's going to be a \$189,000 shortfall where is that money for this program going to come from."

She said Six Nations Literacy is a provincial program that provides funding to teach adults to read but has been stretching its mandate to help between 85-100 children learn to read in after school programs. Those programs, she said would be coming to an end.

"They need \$85,000 to keep that program going. Where is it going to come from."

She said Polytechnic Institute is helping students who left school get back to the basics by trying to provide high school equivalency programs and help at risk students who need extra support. But, she said that program cost \$35,000 to operate.

"ICOR is suggesting to council when you meet with INAC because we add an addendum to the current tuition agreement so INAC can purchase these services from community base programs at a cost of \$304,000 a year."

Band Councillor Glenda Porter agreed. "These are basic, important issues we should try to bring forward in our meeting with INAC to try to get the money to continue."