

# SN Social Services hiring new youth workers funded by Ontario

By Chase Jarrett  
Writer

Band Council has received funding for two full time and a part time children's mental health workers and is hiring.

Ontario's "Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy" will see approximately \$6.25 million in funding go to over 30 First Nations health centres resulting in over 80 workers on reserve helping an estimated 4,000 Aboriginal youth.

The workers will be hired under Six Nations Child and Family Services and Ganohkwasra Family As-

sault Support Services and band council is in the process of filling the positions, said Arliss Skye in an email to Turtle Island News.

Skye, Director of Social Services, said, "The workers will work out of Ganohkwasra and Child and Family services."

Skye indicated contract workers would be hired. "There are options within the Six Nations hiring policy that need to be followed and interim measures that allow for contract people," she said.

She said recruitment is ongoing. "The positions have not been filled for Six

Nations Child and Family Services."

"The target population is children and youth 0-18 years," she said.

Skye said Ontario's initiative is a positive move and fresh approach to mental health and addictions problems on First Nations. "It is a positive move that the province is looking beyond the healthcare system to other factors that contribute to reduce mental health issues and addiction," she said.

Child and Family Services operates under the Social Services Department of Band Council.

"Helping Aboriginal chil-

dren and youth get the support they need to address their unique challenges is part of the McGuinty government's plan to create a mental health and addictions system that is more responsive and tailored to the needs of children, youth and their families," said an Ontario news release.

"These new workers will provide counseling, individual group therapy, crisis intervention, and a range of traditional health services, including traditional teachings and services," said the release.

Meanwhile, Sandy Montour, executive director of

Ganohkwasra, said the funding won't be sufficient for the current demand: "Last year, Ganohkwasra provided counselling services to 174 Six Nations children and youth. The children and youth attending services at Ganohkwasra Family Assault Support Services have been impacted by family violence and abuse. This is often compounded with various losses, tragedies and stressors of today's society leaving our children, who are our most precious resource, vulnerable and in need for mental health support. While Ganohk-

wasra is grateful to receive dollars for a part-time Mental Health Counsellor, this is not sufficient funding to meet the demand that we see coming through our doors."

The \$6.25 million is going to First Nations support out of an expected \$93 million that will be given out for Ontario's Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy.

The strategy announced Nov. 30 is aiming to serve 4,000 Aboriginal children and youth across Ontario, with 83 workers serving 50 youth per year.

The workers are distributed across First Nations.