

# Federal Aboriginal Affairs fails to provide school supplies

By Donna Duric  
Writer

Six Nations Band Council may dip into gaming funds as an emergency measure to help offset a shortage of teaching materials and supplies at Six Nations schools.

Band Councillor Carl Hill said it might take that step

OMSK Home and School Association Chair Lana Henhawk.

The shortage has been so critical, she said the association had to dip into its own funds to buy \$1,500 worth of emergency supplies in late September.

Cutfeet said AANDC would "fully reimburse"

enough.

Bill Monture, a member of the Six Nations Men's Fire whose granddaughter attends OMSK, said council should dip into its gaming funds to help Six Nations schools.

"I would take some of those Rama dollars," he said, referring to council's former agreement to receive a portion of gaming revenues from Casino Rama near Orillia, Ont. "We've got all that money sitting there."

Band Council receives a portion of Ontario Lottery and Gaming (OLG) revenues every year through a new agreement with the Ontario First Nations Limited Partnership (OFNLP). One per cent of all gaming revenues in the province are split up among Ontario's First Nations.

Councillor Carl Hill said he would bring it up with council during a meeting later that day as an emergency measure, and then later, council would go after the government for the blunder.

"We'll stand behind you," Monture told him.

While protesters ques-

tioned Cutfeet on the front steps of the federal building in Brantford, one Six Nations parent, Courtney Martin, broke down and cried. She hugged Cutfeet, saying she didn't want to fight with other Onkwehonwe people. Cutfeet is Anishinabe and lives in Thunder Bay.

"I want to thank you for coming here," said Martin tearfully. "I'm so sorry. I don't want to fight against our own people. It's them," she said, pointing at the federal building.

Monture and Hill said political differences between band council and the Men's Fire would be put aside for the sake of the children.

"It's good we can stand together on issues like that concerning our people," said Monture.

"It's about time," he said. "I'm here today for the future of our kids," said Hill. "They deserve every equal opportunity as surrounding communities when it comes to educating our kids. It's just too bad Indian Affairs doesn't see it that way. If they did, they would have had the orders here long before today."



Six Nations parent hugs AANDC spokesman James Cutfeet saying she didn't want to "fight against our own people." Cutfeet (inset) says AANDC is working on the problem. (Photo by Donna Duric)

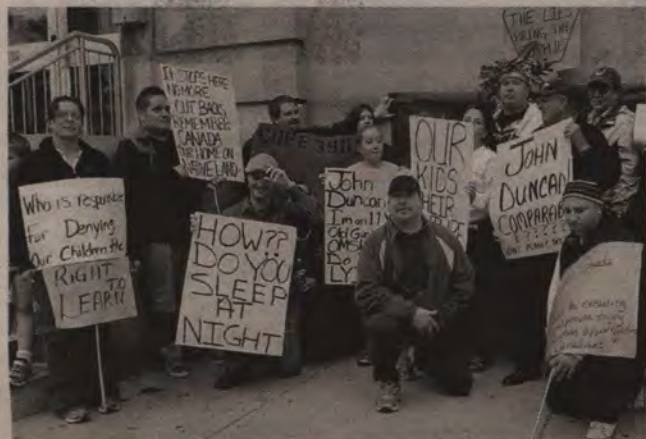
Hill said Cutfeet's lack of answers is not unusual.

"We've talked to James Cutfeet on a few issues in the past and as usual, he sidesteps all the answers."

He said OMSK alone needs \$25,000 for one year's worth of supplies, and if Six Nations' four other schools are factored in, the amount of gaming funds needed would total over \$100,000.

Six Nations people were joined by Toronto union activists at Friday's protest. They plan to take a convoy to AANDC's main office in Toronto tomorrow (Thursday) and are inviting community members to join them.

Numerous e-mails and phone calls to AANDC seeking comment have not been returned.



Parents and supporters protested outside Brantford's federal building last week (Photo by Donna Duric)

while protesting at Brantford's regional Aboriginal And Northern Development Canada (AANDC) office last Friday, where about two dozen people demonstrated against the lack of supplies plaguing Six Nations schools this year.

Six Nations schools have been left without basic supplies such as pens, pencils, paper and learning materials since the beginning of the school year and AANDC has failed to say why.

Protesters that included Six Nations parents demanded answers Friday morning from James Cutfeet, AANDC senior adviser for First Nations schools, but he could not explain the blunder.

"We're working on it right now," he told the group repeatedly. "Those orders are being processed."

Six Nations schools sent out orders for the supplies in May and normally receive them sometime during the summer, said

the home and school association.

He said the "funding is there" to provide the supplies, but he didn't say why they haven't arrived yet.

"Some minor adjustments were made internally and we're working through it," he said.

"The system is broken, then, is that what you're saying?" asked Councillor Hill.

Cutfeet denied there was anything wrong with AANDC's education system, which funds and oversees education at only two reserves in Canada - Six Nations and Tyendinaga.

He also denied the suggestion that the supplies haven't come in as a way of forcing Six Nations to take over its education system from the federal government.

In the meantime, Cutfeet said they did not have an emergency plan to help the schools other than dropping off a few pens and pencils last Thursday.

Parents said that was not