

A conversation with Chief Staats

by Andrea Buma

OHSWEKEN - In a recent conversation, Chief Wellington Staats commented on the band membership issue that has been raised by a recent human rights tribunal ruling on a Kahnawake case.

Staats said of the restrictive Kahnawake membership rules, "I don't think they are doing it to be harsh, it's a very complex issue, and they are doing what they think they need to do."

The Chief reported that out of 133 Six Nations marriages last year, 82 or 83 were to non-band members. Staats said that it is a natural development, especially with kids going off to universities and colleges. "I don't know that you can control that," he said.

Staats said that Six Nations accepts the DIA standards to determine membership, but that the band does control who is given residency on the territory.

The Chief explained that since 1986, there is a second generation rule in effect to govern Indian status. If someone who is 50% native marries a non-Native, their child will lose status.

Staats says that there is a definite problem, the danger that the native bloodline will dilute until "there are no Indians left. Then there won't be a need for reserves. Maybe we will extinguish our rights."

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