

Trial continues into Six Nations girl refusing chemotherapy

(Continued from page 4)

Miller said she understood the family said they would try chemo again if traditional medicines don't work. "I don't see her (the mother) as depriving (the girl) of treatment," said Miller. "She is providing treatment; just a different form."

McMaster lawyer Daphne Jarvis told Miller the Hippocrates Health Institute in Florida where the girl went for treatment is "not a hospital", but Miller disagreed. "In your opinion it's not a hospital. In my opinion, it is. It is very similar to our traditional treatments on Six Nations."

Justice Gethin Edward said McMaster Children's Hospital is "open to what can be done better" and is "trying to avoid this in the future." At the end of the trial,

Miller said, "There is going to be a party that's going to oppose your decision either way."

Dr. Karen Hill

Dr. Hill acts as a liaison at a traditional medicine practice on Six Nations called Juddah's Place with Western medicine. Dr. Hill told the court, "We have a lot of complex patients that come and see us."

She testified, "Traditional medicine does not require my or Western medicine's validation to exist or be effective."

Dr. Hill told the court Western medicine does not treat the whole person but in effect, is akin to spray-painting the leaves of a sick tree green.

In traditional medicine, she said, "You have to look at the root. What is going into that tree? You have to treat

the whole person, not just the disease."

She provided some observance of two different cancer patients who came through the doors of Juddah's place. One used only traditional medicine and is still alive. The other used both traditional medicine and chemotherapy and is no longer alive.

She said traditional medicine practitioners are always asked by Western doctors to prove their medicine works.

"This is not only damaging to this family but to the entire indigenous community," said Dr. Hill. "We're the ones who understand our medicine. We know that (it works) by history, by experience. If we need to come back, we'll give that (chemo) a try again. There's children who die taking

chemotherapy, too, but we don't stop their treatments. Same with traditional medicine. We don't stop even if some people die. It's everyone's choice. That's what I was taught in medical school."

Jarvis questioned Hill on the ability of Six Nations health care workers to interpret blood work samples and if there was a lab on Six Nations. Hill told her there is a lab on Six Nations.

Jarvis gave Hill a hypothetical scenario involving examples of blood counts of different blood cells (a complete blood count, or CBC) and asked what Hill would make of that CBC reading. Hill answered without hesitating that the scenario Jarvis provided would be indicative of "circulating lymphoblasts" (immature lymphocyte cells normally

found in bone marrow), also an early sign of acute lymphoblastic leukemia.

Hill said she is "the biggest skeptic there is" but has seen people cured of diabetes and renal failure with traditional medicine.

"Going against (the girl or her mother's wishes) would cause her harm," said Hill. "We need to think of harm as more than the physical." Hill said, "It would be nice if traditional medicine and Western medicine could collaborate."

With traditional medicine, Hill said, "It's not about what went wrong, it's about elevating what is right. It's not about squashing (the illness) but bringing health forward. Removing (the girl), to me, is not a death sentence."

Dr. Dawn Martin-Hill

Martin-Hill's testimony fo-

cused on the history of traditional medicine and how it interacts or clashes with a Western world-view.

As an anthropologist, she said she was impressed to learn the girl speaks, reads and writes Mohawk fluently. She said the language is "very sophisticated" and the ability to speak an indigenous language is considered a sign of wellness in the community.

Martin-Hill pointed out the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (RCAP) as well as the United Nations have both decreed that indigenous people have the right to practice and use traditional medicine.

"To date, the (Canadian) government hasn't done that," she said.

The Regulated Health Professions Act of 1991 also

(Continued on page 20)