

Trial continues into Six Nations girl refusing chemotherapy

(Continued from page 20) provides that right, she said. Martin-Hill said it's because of her department at McMaster University that aboriginal people have gained more access to medical degree programs.

She said the hospital is not as open as it should be in providing spaces for traditional healing practices, such as smudging.

"We're not quite there yet," she said. "McMaster has not been open to having ceremonies in the university. It is done covertly."

Jarvis asked Martin-Hill if all hospitals should provide a space for every ethnic group in Canada to practice their own traditional beliefs. Martin-Hill said that those people have a homeland where they can freely practice their culture but that Canada is the only home of

Mohawk people.

She told the court the Western world has treated traditional medicine in the context of intellect. "That is the context in which traditional healing has been discussed," said Martin-Hill.

When early European colo-



Dr. Dawn Martin-Hill

nizers arrived on Turtle Island, they survived with the help of traditional healers, said Martin-Hill.

Slowly, colonizers began setting up their own structured, institutionalized healthcare models and when healthcare became "an economy", said Hill,

that's when colonizers started referring to indigenous health care as "quackery."

"Traditional medicine existed underground so we don't have the evidence required to prove its efficacy regarding Western diseases," she said.

Colonizers have since, "created a knowledge hierarchy," she said. "Everything else that doesn't follow that (Western) thinking is wrong."

She said Western medicine is used as a yardstick to measure all other forms of health care against and that right now, only Western medicine is considered truly valid.

"Indigenous knowledge is valid within its own pedagogies and science," said Martin-Hill.

She provided the judge with

a copy of The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as an exhibit.

"Eighty per cent of the world's population depends on indigenous knowledge for health," said Martin-Hill. She noted that 25 per cent of pharmaceuticals used today are plant-based.

A number of Six Nations people in the courtroom audience quietly cheered when Martin-Hill compared the notion that Western medicine is the only right choice for an indigenous girl to residential schools.

"They (residential school administrators) really thought it was in our best interest," she said. "I see no difference in what's happening here today."

Martin-Hill repeated Miller's earlier assertion that Six Nations children are leery of

Western institutions and culture. "They're quite intimidated by (it)," she said.

Andrew Koster CAS

Koster said he did not apprehend the girl because, "We didn't think she was a child in need of protection." "There was nothing we could see as a cause for concern for how (the girl) was being parented."

He said the family informed the hospital it would be taking a three-week leave to pursue alternative treatments, and doctors again shook their heads. He said they had a "grudging acceptance" of the family's plans.

"I thought there was a mutual understanding and even rapport with the senior administration (at the hospital)," said Koster. "It was simply from their standpoint, a medical deci-

sion (to call CAS)."

He said the hospital asked him if this was an "aboriginal issue" to which he took offense.

"I saw a mother who is broken up over the choices she was making. I felt that this is a caring mom."

He said taking the girl away from a "loving family" at this time would be a "terribly intrusive step" that would inflict "unnecessary trauma" on the girl.

"Stress is not good for anybody," he said. "There is no way I can see that (being beneficial) to her. I can't see other people she knows taking her in. How can I actually help her by removing her? I really deep down believe this (court action) never should have happened."

The case resumes today (Wednesday) in Brantford.