

OHONDAWAGONEE

A VOICE FROM THE EASTERN DOOR

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Freedom School Students To Appear in Environmental Film



Back L-r: Linda Sierolawski, Producer, Dave Joy, Camera and John Chyurlia, Audio. The kindergarten kids are Kanetha George, Iohonwa'wi Fox, Konwahonkawi Shenendoah, Kakwiro:ton Cook, Wahienhawi Rourke and Karonhihotha Skidders. Missing is Rowisen'a:wi Cook who helped in creating the fish.

by Margaret Peters

Friday, May 15 was a busy day for the students of the Akwesasne Freedom School. The children will be part of a half hour television program that deals with the importance of the environment, and the theme of the program will be water.

It is a pilot project for Mid-Canada television network, produced by Terry Cochrane Productions Ltd. (Ottawa) in association with the Canadian Museum of Nature.

The presence of the camera

crew was welcomed by the students and the grade 3 and 4 class gladly allowed themselves to be interviewed by the producer Linda Sierolawski. Miss Sierolawski's questions all pertained to water and to the reasons as to why the Mohawk people give it thanks and greetings.

The children were very informative and explained to the best of their ability why they thought it was important to do so. Although the Kindergarten class

was a bit camera shy at first, they later relented to posing for some pictures with the crew. They were very proud to display the giant fish they made themselves. Because the theme of the month for the A.F.S. students is water and water-life, the timing of the visiting camera crew was perfect.

The date when the show will be aired is still unknown, but the producer hinted that it may be sometime in June.

Photo: Sandi Cook.

Mohawks, Others Join Forces to Fight New York State Taxes

The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe is joining forces with other American Indians throughout New York State to fight the Legislature's most recent attempt to impose racially-biased, unconstitutional taxes on reservation businesses.

If a handful of zealous in state government get their way, New York will go beyond its authority and try to collect taxes on reservation businesses' sales to non-natives.

The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal council sees this attempted taxation as a direct assault on Mohawk sovereignty. Furthermore, the Tribal Council vows to oppose any taxation efforts by New York State.

With the assistance of a well-financed, high-pressure lobbying effort, sponsored by the Independent Petroleum Marketers of New York (IPMNY), Sen. John B. Daly (R-Niagara County) and Assemblyman Anthony J. Genovesi (D-Brooklyn) have sponsored anti-Indian bills in both houses of the State Legislature.

These bills have been ramrodded through the state system with unprecedented speed and priority based on half-truths and lies perpetrated by the Independent

Petroleum Marketers' high-priced lobbyists.

In less than two weeks, these bills (Senate No. 7988 and Assembly No. 1164) have been introduced, hustled through committee and are now before the entire Legislature for a vote - a process which normally takes months or even years.

Tribal Council Chiefs Lincoln C. White, Norman J. Tarbell and L. David Jacobs said, "No one can show us another bill that has moved this quickly, with the exception of budget bills."

"It is also unusual that a hearing about this legislation will be held after it is already to be put to a vote. Usually hearings are a means of determining whether or not a bill is practical and desirable. Obviously the sponsors of these bills have already made up their minds," the Chiefs added.

The hearing, which is being called by the sponsors of this bill rather than the appropriate committee, is scheduled for May 27 in Albany.

Reply forms for those people wishing to testify at the public hearing are available at the Tribe's Public Information Office. Also, the Tribe will charter a bus to transport anyone interested in

attending the hearing. The bus will leave from the Community Building at 5:15 a.m. on Wednesday, May 27.

Additionally, the Tribal Council said New York State lacks the authority to impose and collect taxes on Indian reservations because the tribes enjoy much the same status as states in the eyes of the U.S. government. "New York cannot come on a reservation and collect taxes anymore than it can go to Vermont or Pennsylvania or New Jersey and collect taxes from merchants in those states who sell goods to New Yorkers. It is simply beyond the state's jurisdiction."

The Tribal Council also noted it is ironic that the IPMNY could spend so much time and money lobbying for this bill yet stand silently by and watch as the Legislature imposes additional taxes on gasoline in non-reservation parts of the state.

"When it comes time to look out for the interests of New York State taxpayers by fighting gas tax increases, the IPMNY play the ostrich act. But now, when non-natives find some tax relief on American Indian territory, the

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Deputy Minister of New York Visits Mohawk School



Photo: Derrick Paul.

From L-r: At far left is Deputy Minister of Education Arthur Walton, Adelaine "Blinky" Herne, William Mitchell and Karen White, chairperson of the Education Committee. Walton was presented with a splint basket by the committee.

by Derrick Paul/Staff

On May 13, the future of Akwesasne was being discussed with regards to toxic contamination.

Almost immediately afterward, another group was also discussing the future of Akwesasne. This was with regards to Education.

On that morning, the Data on the Breastmilk Study was being released to the press at the Hall.

Up the road at the St. Regis Mohawk School, Principal William Mitchell and the Education Committee met with Deputy Commissioner Arthur Walton from Albany that afternoon.

He was in town getting familiar with reservation schools under his jurisdiction.

The other schools in his territory are in Onondaga and Tuscarora. His visit coincided with the ongoing project in which construction of a new Mohawk School is in the process.

The Deputy Commissioner heard from the various members of the Education Committee, (pictured above) and they had several issues to discuss. These include a new school and to get the State of New York for more aid for post secondary education.

A feasibility study on a new building has been done and this is going through channels.

According to Mitchell, this is the

second year of the feasibility study and past attempts at action have not worked. However, he was optimistic that something will be done this time.

"There has always been talk but this time there is motion, and this will probably happen in the next few years."

The education committee has put together the feasibility study and other documents to show why a new facility is needed. This is being presented to Philip Sobol, Educational Commissioner of New York State.

The Education Committee put together an information package to indicate why a new building is needed. Either a new school or upgrading of the present one is needed.

The main issue is space. Statistics say that Akwesasne is going through a population boom and this is affecting the schools. Using the Mohawk School as an example, students have been rejected in the past because of full capacity in the classrooms.

Students needing special remedial attention are sent to Salmon River and at the same time, another family member remains in Hogansburg.

This results in the splitting up of families.

The Mohawk School has become a part of Akwesasne's history and the role it plays is an important

one. Besides the education area, the facility is used for sporting events, community functions and public forums.

Right now, the school is from Pre-K to Grade Three. A new proposed school would have the capabilities of handling Pre-K to Grade Six.

A Special Act policy would be enacted if there would be another school.

The Education Committee reports: *The District School board is not truly representative of our native population and the best interest of our students is not taken into consideration through their board policy and actions.*

This has always been the case in the education of our students and we strongly feel that change is of the essence.

They continue: Becoming a Special Act District will result in a greater leadership role in education for our tribe. When cuts are made to the district school budget, the St. Regis Mohawk School is adversely affected as a consequence.

Right now there are three Native American teachers at the Hogansburg school and there are eighteen certified teachers who are not working. If there are budget cuts at Salmon River, these teachers will be gone.

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Ransom Proposes Gaming Compromise

James W. Ransom, candidate for chief in the upcoming Tribal election, released a proposal to address the gaming issue at Akwesasne.

"I proposed that the one mile square of land located in Massena as part of Akwesasne's land claims be moved to an area between Massena and Akwesasne. A casino-bingo complex could be built on this site that would be owned by Akwesasne and jointly regulated by the State and Tribe," Ransom stated.

Ransom believes that this solution would provide the jobs and revenue the supporters of casino gambling want and the location would address the concerns of community members opposed to casino gambling. In addition, he believes the location would mean that Massena would

benefit as well and this solution may help to settle the land claims in a quicker time-frame.

"I have not supported the signing of a Tribal-State Gaming Compact because it is a threat to the rights of our community," Ransom stated explaining why he has been opposed to casino gambling.

"The Tribal-State Gaming Compact should be negotiable and apply only to this location," Ransom emphasized so that community rights will not be threatened. The Tribal-State Gaming Compact is an agreement to be signed by the Tribe and New York State that is necessary to regulate casino gambling. In 1990, the Tribal Council sued New York State over the compact and the case has been tied up in federal court since then.

"I do not agree with the Tribal

Council's decision to sue New York State. Hundreds of thousands of dollars are being paid to Tribal lawyers when this matter can be resolved through negotiation," he added.

Ransom ended stating that this proposal was not meant as the final say on the gaming issue but that it represented an idea for the community to explore, evaluate and respond to.

"Solutions to issues such as casino gambling must be developed by all of the community. Tribal leaders should propose compromises for the community to think about, discuss, and approve, instead of forcing decisions on people that only create more problems," Ransom concluded.