

LOCAL NEWS



Pictured left to right: MCA Chief Lynn Roundpoint, former Chief Angie Barnes, Gail McDonald (center), MCA Chief JoAnne Jackson and former Grand Chief Mike Mitchell.

Photo: Staff

Appreciation Luncheon Held for Gail McDonald

On Friday, April 25, 1995 several Mohawk Council of Akwesasne employees attended an appreciation luncheon to say thank you and farewell to Gail McDonald. Gail has been the Director of the Mohawk Council Department of Social Development and Health for the past nine years. Gail formally resigned her position in February of this year and states that it was a difficult decision but she felt she must do what's best for her at this time.

The luncheon was attended by several staff members of the Social Development and Health Programs as well as Former Grand Chief Mike Mitchell and former Chief Angie Barnes. Current Chiefs JoAnne Jackson and Lynn Roundpoint also attended.

In presenting a gift to Gail, Mike Mitchell stated how it is important to remember that community accomplishments are not because of the efforts of only one person but a team approach. Therefore, a leader must look to Program Directors and staff. He said when he looked to the Managers, Gail was a great help to him. He said he was aware of the

achievements Gail had made while working for the Assembly of First Nations so he persuaded her to come home and share her skills as a technician and leader with the Akwesasne community. As a result, today we can see all the new facilities around the community. Mike announced that Gail will be doing some consultant work for the Mohawk Roundtable. He added as Gail gains experience from working with other First Nations she can bring it back to us when she comes home again.

Gail spoke about the difficult decision she had in deciding whether to resign or not. However, she says the fast pace of completing projects had put a strain on her health. Gail is presently under contract with the Chiefs of Ontario as a consultant to share her experience and knowledge with other First Nations who are struggling and moving in the same directions as Akwesasne. She said it is gratifying to assist other First Nations and always uses Akwesasne as a model of what can be accomplished. She said as she looks around the community she can see how far we have come and how much we can

accomplish when we work together.

When Gail began working for the Department of Social Development and Health, they had about 7 programs with 45 staff members. Today, there are 18 programs and services offered under the Social Development and Health Department with over 200 staff.

In her closing remarks to the group gathered, Gail said she has learned a lot from working with the community and she feels honored to have her achievements for the community acknowledged.

Chief Lynn Roundpoint presented a plaque on behalf of Mohawk Council in honor of appreciation to Gail for her nine years of working towards achieving the vision Mohawk Council set for developments in community health.

Hilary LaFrance presented gifts on behalf of the Department of Social Development and Health to Gail which included Native carvings by local carver, Leroy David. Several staff members embraced Gail and made comments such as "I admire You", "We'll Miss you" and of course, "Thank you for all you've done for us." Niawen Gail.

EXPAND, Cont'd from Front Page.

Norman J. Tarbell and Chief Philip H. Tarbell said the expansion and improvement of the Mohawk School is greatly needed and long overdue.

"This is truly an important occasion for our Mohawk Children and our community," the chiefs said in a joint statement. "We will now be able to provide the entire spectrum of elementary school services to our students while preserving our culture and passing on our language.

"We are extremely grateful to the New York State Education Department for providing the funding for this project and the State Dormitory Authority for all of its design expertise and for overseeing this project," the Chiefs added.

The project will improve the handicapped accessibility in the existing school and will better utilize the space available. Also, the oldest part of the school will be demolished and replaced, electrical and mechanical systems will be improved, new fuel oil tanks will be installed, and the septic system will be hooked on to the Tribe's new sewer system.

Work on the project will be completed in two phases over two consecutive building seasons.

Phase I, which is scheduled for completion by September 1995, will consist of an addition on the west side of what is currently the cafeteria and pre-K wing.

Phase II, which calls for the demolition of the two-story "convent" built by the Ursuline Sisters in 1897, and replacing its space with an expanded gymnasium, new kitchen/cafeteria, administrative offices, library, and rooms for music, art and Mohawk language, will be completed by September 1996. A new main entrance and bus load-

ing/unloading area located on the south side of the existing building will also be part of Phase II.

Nine new classrooms will be constructed to house approximately 180 new students in grades 4-6. New locker rooms and a new stage will be constructed in the gym and a corridor will be installed to route student traffic around the gym rather than the current path through it.

Asbestos removal, in anticipation of the renovation project, was completed during the two-week Easter break. William Mitchell, School Principal said he took every precaution to ensure that children were not around the school when the removal was taking place.

This is not the first renovation that the Mohawk School has seen over the years. According to Mr. Mitchell, in 1935 New York State granted funds to renovate up to the third grade section and the gym. In 1953 an addition was added that included the foyer, library, cafeteria and the pre-K wing. Again in 1980 an addition was added to the library and teacher room with a storage room added to the gym. The last renovation took place in 1986 when the "covenant" section was renovated to add 5 new teaching stations.

Mr. Mitchell added that currently there are 295 students enrolled in Mohawk School. He anticipates the enrollment could climb to approximately 475-500 students when the renovations are completed.

