



"Assisting member Nations achieve their goals"

Bill S-11 Safe drinking water for First Nations Act

by Julia Hill,
Health Policy Analyst

LONDON – Bill S-11, known as the Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act, was first introduced by the Senate of Canada in May 2010. The Senate is a part of the Parliament of Canada and is responsible for reviewing legislation in the form of bills. A major limitation of the Senate is that it cannot initiate money bills, i.e. any bills imposing taxes or the spending of public monies. Bill S-11 outlines strict water and wastewater regulations on reserve lands; yet, it cannot commit any financial support to assist First Nations in achieving these standards. This is a pressing issue as many First Nations in Ontario currently lack the necessary infrastructure and human resources to provide safe drinking

water in their communities. Some of the areas in which Bill S-11 regulations may apply include:

- Training and certification of operators of drinking water and wastewater systems
- Drinking water source protection
- Design, construction, maintenance, operation of drinking water and wastewater systems
- Monitoring, testing, and reporting of drinking water and wastewater
- Emergency measures in case of water contamination

In these particular areas, First Nations may agree that such regulations and the resources to support them are crucial to ensuring safe drinking water on-reserve. However, there has been an obvious lack of consultation and accommodation with First Nations during the drafting of this bill as there are specific provisions that are detrimental to the rights and autonomy of First Nations. Of utmost concern, under section 4(1)(r), The regulations may provide for the relationship between the regulations and aboriginal and treaty rights ... including the extent to which the regulations may abrogate or derogate from those aboriginal and treaty rights.

This clause contradicts section 35 of the Constitution Act that recognizes and affirms the existing rights of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada. If enacted, this bill also has the power to prevail over any laws, land claims and self-government agreements made by a First Nation. It is clear from such provisions that the Government of Canada is attempting to undermine First Nations' laws as well as Aboriginal and treaty rights. Lack of financial resources, lack of consultation and the infringement of Aboriginal rights are major reasons why First Nations communities and organizations are opposed to Bill S-11.

At the national and regional levels, the Assembly of First Na-



First Nation students rally in Ottawa to protect their treaty rights to education – September 23, 2010

tions (AFN) and Chiefs of Ontario (COO) requested adequate resources to complete an impact and economic analyses regarding Bill S-11. As a top-down solution, Neegan Burnside Ltd. was contracted in May 2009 to conduct a National Assessment of First Nation Water and Wastewater Systems. This assessment was scheduled to be done by November 2010; however, it has been delayed to January 2011. Once

the final report is released, AIAI will be presenting an overview of this assessment to the political leadership.

On October 28th 2010, AIAI Grand Chief Randall Phillips, Deputy Grand Chief Chris McCormick and Member Nation Chiefs met with a members of the Canadian Senate to voice their concerns on Bill S-11. The purpose of this meeting was also to build rapport with the senators and gain their support to

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AIAI mourns loss of colleague

The employees of the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians are recovering from the loss of a dear colleague and friend, S. Carol Hill.

The Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians would like to dedicate this issue of the AIAI Times to the memory of S. Carol Hill, who passed away suddenly on December 12, 2010.

Carol worked with the Association for 14 years, most recently as AIAI's director of the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy.



S. Carol Hill
August 29, 1965 - December 12, 2-2010

For more, see page 4.

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Batchewana First Nation of Ojibways * Caldwell First Nation * Delaware Nation * Hiawatha First Nation
Mississaugas of New Credit * Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte * Oneida Nation of the Thames * Wahta Mohawks

From the Office of the Grand Chief

Shekoli and welcome to the second edition of the AIAI Times. I wanted to take some time in this edition to provide our readers with a better sense of what the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians does on a regular basis. In this edition you will read a number of articles

implement our mission on a daily basis. But how does AIAI do this? Our organization is basically divided into two sections: political and program assistance. I wish to speak about the political side. Over the past few years we have focused on enhancing this aspect, to keep in line with our mission

“AIAI will assist member Nations to meet their goals and aspirations and will be an advocate and lobbyist with external governments”

relating to various government legislation, programs or other policy initiatives. But we've realized that as an organization that provides that service, our communication on these issues with the people needed to be improved.

Our mission statement (a statement that guides the organization), states...AIAI will assist member Nations to meet their goals and aspirations and will be an advocate and lobbyist with external governments. We have built and rebuilt an organization that strives to

statement. We have policy analysts in the field of federal/provincial relations, education, health and social issues.

We know that the federal and provincial government has developed all kinds of rules and regulations that impact on First Nations people. We know that the policy and guidelines developed to implement and oversee these rules and regulations continue to cause negative effects on our efforts to change the socio-economic situation in our communities. Issues relating to education, income assistance,

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ASSOCIATION OF IROQUOIS AND ALLIED INDIANS' GRAND CHIEF
RANDALL PHILLIPS

AIAI TIMES



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Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians fights to protect Aboriginal and Treaty Rights

by Chris McCormick, Deputy Grand Chief

LONDON—As the Deputy Grand Chief I have been mandated by Chiefs Council to deal with a number of issues confronting our communities and imposing on our Aboriginal and Treaty Rights.

One of the largest issues recently is the Harmonized Sales Tax and the First Nations fight to protect our tax exemption at point of purchase in the Province of Ontario.

Without consulting with First Nations the Government of Ontario and Canada moved ahead with an agreement that would see the blending of the provincial and federal sales taxes in Ontario. The result is the Harmonized Sales Tax or HST as everyone knows it.

These Governments failed to consider First Nations Treaty rights to tax exemption in their discussion and the agreement that resulted.

As a result from political pressure from First Nation Leadership and direct action such as protests and petitions, the Province and the Federal government agreed to consider reinstating First Nations point of sale exemption to the provincial portion of the HST. This, was easier said than done though.

As the Deputy Grand Chief of the Association I was appointed by the AIAI Chiefs Council to be our representative on a regional committee that was coordinated by the Chiefs of Ontario, and would lead the discussions and negotiations on the HST. I was also selected as the primary spokesperson for this committee.

There were a series of meetings held with the Province of Ontario and attempts were made to bring the Federal Government to the table but they

refused to meet in a tripartite process. They insisted that this was a provincial matter and did not want anything to do with the process. Overall this seemed to be a ploy to not recognize our right to tax exemption.

There was disagreement on all three sides of how the HST would impact First Nations. The Province and Federal governments contended that there

Finance that they wanted the First Nation's exemption at point of purchase to be included in the Federal – Provincial Agreement. The province complied and a letter was written by Minister Duncan to the Federal Minister of Finance. Following the writing of the letter federal officials agreed to meet jointly.

A series of meetings did occur between First Nations (committee), the provincial and federal government. After arduous negotiation sessions an agreement was reached in regards to the First Nation tax exemption.

The HST Committee was able to secure a number of enhancements to our old exemption. Our exemption is now legislated, before it was only a policy and status Indians living off-reserve get the same HST exemptions as First Nations who live on reserve, First Nations people living off-reserve will get an added exemptions for internet, telephone and cable and there is now an exemption for fast foods.

The Chiefs of Ontario HST Committee continues to monitor and deal with any incidents or threats to our Aboriginal or Treaty rights where our exemption is not honoured.

AIAI to meet with Ontario Minister of Aboriginal Affairs/Attorney General over tobacco seizures

The Association has been recently working on the issue of tobacco manufacturing in our communities. We have received several complaints that our businesses and citizens in AIAI member Nations are experiencing harassment and are also being threat-

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AIAI DEPUTY GRAND CHIEF
CHRIS MCCORMICK

would be minimal impact to First Nations and they had studies to support this.

The HST Committee decided that we should conduct our own study to refute the government findings. The committee hired Dr. Fred Lazar, an economist with a doctoral degree from Harvard University.

As a result of Dr. Lazar's report many of the government's claims were refuted. He found that the HST would have severe economic impacts on First Nation families.

The committee requested that based on these findings that the province officially notify the Federal Minister of

Federal Policy and Legislative Updates

by Joshua Shoemaker
Federal Policy and Government Relations Advisor

Canada pushes Bill C-3

Gender equity in Indian Registration Act becomes law

OTTAWA – To the disappointment of First Nations leaders, the Government of Canada passed the Gender Equity in Indian Registration Act on December 15, 2010. Canada introduced the legislation to comply with a Supreme Court of Canada ruling that the Indian Act violated the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms on the basis of gender discrimination. First Nations leaders had hoped that the ruling would push Canada to revise its method of determining status eligi-

bility by ending the separation of Indian Status and Band membership, and acknowledging the inherent right of First Nations to determine their own membership. Instead, the law offers only limited change to the Indian Act, and does little to correct the gender discrimination contained in it.

Previously, a person with only one parent eligible for Status could apply under Section 6(2) of the Indian Act. With the new law in place, individuals with only one parent eligible for Indian Status can now apply under Section 6(1) provided that: (1) Their mother lost status as a result of marriage between (but not limited to) September 4, 1951 and April 17, 1985; (2) Their father is not eligible for Status under the provisions of the Indian Act; (3) The person was born after their parents were married but before April 17, 1985. People born after

April 17, 1985 are eligible only if their parents were married prior to that date; and (4) The person had or adopted a child after September 4, 1951 with a person who is not eligible for Indian Status.

As a result of the new law, children of only one parent registered under Section 6(2) of the Indian Act may now be eligible for Status under Section 6(2) themselves. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) is expecting that approximately 45,000 persons will be newly entitled to registration, most of which live off-reserve.

Unfortunately, INAC has not pledged any additional funding for the anticipated increases in Band membership and newly registered Status holders, placing further stress on already strained budgets.

Although the legislation is already law, the Association continues to advocate for the inherent right of First Nations to determine their own membership. In light of the looming increase in Band membership, AIAI intends on discussing the issue of capacity dollars with government officials at both the federal and provincial level in the coming months.

If you believe that you or someone you know may be newly eligible for Status as a result of Gender Equity in Indian Registration Act, please contact Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (www.ainc-inac.gc.ca) or your local Band Office for more information.

...(Act) does little to correct gender discrimination

United Nations declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples becomes universal

OTTAWA – On November 12, 2010, the Government of Canada formally endorsed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), with the United States following suit on December 15, 2010. The UNDRIP establishes a minimum standard for the treatment of Indigenous peoples across the globe, and acknowledges rights to self-determination, cultural and social preservation, economic development and treaty adherence. While the declaration represents almost three decades of work by government officials and Indigenous leaders, the 46 Article document offers a comprehensive set of policy standards for all governments to observe.

Although First Nations leaders in Canada welcomed the announcement, AIAI is deeply concerned about the qualifications Canada placed on its endorsement. Namely, the Government of Canada endorsed the Declaration, “in a manner fully consistent with Canada’s Constitution and laws.” This qualification indicates that Canada may be hesitant to significantly change its current policy (i.e. the Indian Act).

As a result, it is up to First Nations people to hold Canada against the standards set out in the document, and to remind the Government of Canada of its Treaty obligations. The Association continues to incorporate the Declaration into all of its advocacy work, and will continue to remind Canada of the true spirit and intent of the UNDRIP at every opportunity.

First Nations tobacco manufacturers under attack

LONDON – The tobacco industry in Ontario First Nations has recently come under increased pressure from the Province of Ontario and the Ontario Provincial Police. AIAI has received a number of complaints from member Nations that police are stopping, searching and in some cases seizing tobacco products being shipped from one First Nation to another, alleging that the products are ‘contraband’. Additionally, the Province of Ontario is beginning to claim jurisdiction on-reserve, and is requiring the First Nations tobacco industry to comply with its regulations.

The Association is currently working with member Nations and the Government of Ontario to resolve this issue. The Grand Chief and Deputy Grand Chief met with Aboriginal Affairs Minister and Attorney General Christopher Bentley on January 26th, 2011 to begin building a resolution. AIAI leadership and the Minister were able to identify a number of key issues, and have scheduled further meetings to address them in the near future.

Bill S-575 update

First Nations Financial Transparency Act

LONDON – Following a publication by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation that claimed to disclose the salaries of First Nations Chiefs, Conservative MP Kelly Block introduced Bill C-575. The legislation attempts to make the financial information of Chiefs more transparent and accessible, and requires that Chiefs and Council make their salaries, honorariums and expenses publicly available.

AIAI’s leadership is deeply concerned that the legislation makes First Nations Chiefs and Councils accountable to Canadian taxpayers and not First Nations citizens. Additionally, the Bill adds to the already heavy financial reporting requirements facing Chiefs and Council. Debate at Second Reading on Bill C-575 began on November 25, 2010. Although private members Bills rarely become law, AIAI continues to monitor the situation and is prepared to participate in Committee hearings should the Bill arrive at that stage. Since the call for a federal election, all proposed legislation is effectively dead, but may be re-introduced by the next federal government.

Bill S-4 update

Family Homes on Reserve and Matrimonial Interests or Rights Act

OTTAWA – On March 31, 2010, the Government of Canada introduced Bill S-4 – its third attempt at creating a matrimonial real property (MRP) law on-reserve. The legislation creates a federal provisional code that will apply to all communities once the bill becomes law, but also creates the option for First Nations to create their own MRP codes if they choose. The bill, however, fails to consider issues of access to justice, implementation, enforcement and housing shortages.

The Bill has passed through the Senate, and received First Reading in the House of Commons on September 22, 2010. It is scheduled for consideration by the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, but has yet to be addressed. AIAI is currently formulating a letter to all Members of Parliament regarding the shortcomings of the Bill, as well as preparing a submission for the Standing Committee when hearings begin.

Since the call for a federal election, all proposed legislation is effectively dead, but may be re-introduced by the next federal government.

The First Nations Elections Act: a proposal for election reform

LONDON – Following a number of election challenges under the Indian Act elections code, the Atlantic Policy Congress (APC) and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) began leading an initiative on First Nations election reform in October 2010. In the discussion paper, Improving the System for First Nations Elections, the APC and AMC propose new, optional legislation.

Among the many provisions, the new law would extend the terms in office of elected officials to four years, give First Nations

the option to adopt a common date for elections, establish an elections process that does not rely on the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, and would create penalties for election fraud and other illegal activities.

The APC and AMC are currently on a cross country tour consulting with First Nations and collecting feedback on the proposal. Although AIAI is monitoring the situation, it has not been mandated by the Chiefs Council to participate in this process.

In Memoriam

S. Carol Hill

August 29, 1965 – December 12, 2010



This edition of the AIAI Times is dedicated to Carol's memory.

Carol will be sadly missed by her AIAI family

The employees of the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians are recovering from the loss of a dear colleague and friend, S. Carol Hill.

Carol worked with the Association for 14 years. During this time she worked in the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy department. She first began as the Health and Social Advisory Board Coordinator. From this position she moved on to be the AHWS Policy analyst, and finally the AHWS Director. During the various positions held at the Association her passion for the healing of First Nation people was evident and showed in the work and the progress that was made in the area of service delivery for families in need of health and family violence services.

The Association is appreciative of her efforts in these areas, not only for the support shown to their member nations but to all First Nations in Ontario.

Carol was also a dedicated woman to her family. She was known as an "all-around sports mom". She was a proud mother and grandmother. She was also a loving wife, sister, and auntie.

She will be sadly missed by all who knew her and her wonderful, kind and gentle spirit.

“Our Children First”: Sustainable Child Welfare in Ontario

by **Trina McGahey, Director of Social Services**

LONDON – “Our Children First” - is a message the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians (AIAI) wants the Commission to Promote Sustainable Child Welfare to hear clearly, as First Nations children represent the highest number of children in Ontario’s children’s aid societies (CAS).

The Commission to Promote Sustainable Child Welfare is an independent body consisting of McGill University’s Wendy Thomson, an advisor on public service reform for former British Prime Minister Tony Blair; Barry Lewis, an adoptive father and expert in child welfare; and Ene Underwood, a former member of the board of Toronto’s children’s aid society and an adoptive parent. The three member-commission has a three-year mandate to develop and implement solutions to promote the sustainability of child welfare in Ontario, including First Nations.

As many CASs are facing financial challenges, the Commission embarked on working with the Child Welfare sector and government in an effort to: strengthen service delivery, promote financial sustainability, and improve outcomes for the children, youth and families who receive child protection services.

Deputy Grand Chief, Chris McCormick, AIAI Health & Social Advisory Board (H/SAB) members, Sandra Moore (Hiawatha), Helen Tobias (New Credit), Ida Cornelius (Oneida) and the AIAI Director of Social Services, Trina McGahey had the opportunity to meet with the Commissioners on December 20th, 2010, to discuss the Commission’s

first report entitled “Towards Sustainable Child Welfare in Ontario.”

The Commission’s first report reflects the first seven months of the Commission’s work with Ontario Children’s Aid Societies and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. In this report the Commission describes the vision for a sustainable child welfare system and sets out the Commission’s plan of action from now until the Final Report in 2012.

The report outlines a four-tiered strategy for sustainable child welfare; 1) reconfigure the organization of CAS structures and service delivery; 2) change the approach to funding child welfare; 3) implement a new approach to accountability and system management and; 4) strengthen and improve service delivery.

In meeting with two of the

Commissioner’s, Barry Lewis and Ene Underwood, AIAI H/SAB board members expressed their Nation’s concerns and provided the Commissioner’s with an AIAI analysis paper on the Commission’s first report – “Towards Sustainable Child Welfare in Ontario.” AIAI pressed for continued dialogue among AIAI member Nations and the Commission, so that the Ontario Government clearly understands that the sustainability for First Nations Child Welfare is very distinct and different from mainstream CASs.

The key message delivered to the Commission is that First Nations Child Welfare Agencies and programs lack the appropriate resources to be fully effective and require extended capacity and increased funding. First Nations have never given up the right to

protect their own children, but need a “level playing field” in order to do this effectively.

The Commissioners stated they are committed to understanding Aboriginal Child Welfare and should not dictate what a system should look like for First Nations. The Commissioner’s have committed to working with AIAI Member Nations, while AIAI representatives will continue to advocate for the development of viable approaches and interim measures towards our own First Nations Child Welfare Law.

Now is the opportune time for Ontario to listen and assist in creating a positive legacy towards the improvement of child welfare outcomes for First Nations children, youth and families.

Child Canadian Human Rights Tribunal

by **Trina McGahey, Director of Social Services**

OTTAWA – In February, 2007 the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada (FNCFCSC) jointly launched a complaint with the Canadian Human Rights Commission, alleging that the Government of Canada has discriminated against thousands of First Nations children in care due to inadequate funding in comparison to provincial funding levels allocated for child and family services.

This complaint has been a long and drawn out process, with the Government of Canada fighting this complaint

at every chance they get.

Some of the recent key highlights are as follows:

- December 2010: Tribunal allows more submissions on the eve of the jurisdictional motion ruling deadline. Both parties were to file their reply submissions by December 23, 2010.
- Canada is still trying to further their case based on the recent *NIL/TU, O Child and Family Services Society v B.C. Government and Services Employees’ Union and Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada v. Native Child and Fam-*

ily Services of Toronto Supreme Court decisions.

- Attorney General is claiming, Child Welfare is a matter of provincial legislative authority and the provinces have ultimate decision-making control over their operations. Therefore Canada is stating the case should be dismissed because the tribunal has no jurisdiction to hear this complaint.

Therefore it is not clear when a ruling will be made given the approval of new submissions. AIAI will continue to monitor the case and provide updates to Member Nations.

Ipperwash Inquiry Priorities & Action Committee updates

by Victoria Hill

Provincial Policy Analyst and Government Relations Advisor
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Ipperwash Recommendations Update

LONDON – As one of the two new Policy Analyst & Government Relations Advisors for the Association I should begin by introducing myself. My name is Victoria Hill, I am a member of the Oneida Nation of the Thames, and I grew up in St. Thomas, Ontario.

In my role with AIAI I am responsible for following issues and monitoring political activities at the provincial level of government. A majority of this work is done as a member of the Ipperwash Inquiry Priorities and Action Committee (IIPAC), which was established in 2008 as a way for First Nations and the government of Ontario to implement recommendations outlined in the final report of the Ipperwash Inquiry.

A lot of effort is still going into putting those recommendations into action. With this update on the Committee's activities I want to draw your attention to upcoming events and how some of the things the IIPAC is working on may directly affect your community.

First, family members of the late Dudley George and the Kettle and Stony

Point First Nations should be recognized for positive developments since the 1995 protest and the completion of the Inquiry in 2007. A permanent memorial to Dudley George, designed by his brother Piere, was unveiled and celebrated in October 2010. At the same event Chief Cloud of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation announced progress in the legal process of reclaiming the land from the province. Not only that, but Kettle and Stony's own Brandy George, archaeologist, confirmed the existence of 3,000 year-old [CONFIRM] traces of their ancestors. Each of these events is truly inspiring for the on-going efforts of the IIPAC.

So far, progress has been slow. A great learning curve has revealed itself as First Nations and the government of Ontario establish a joint working relationship. The First Nations IIPAC members have begun a renewal approach to our relationship and working processes with Ontario representatives to get us out of this rut.

First Nations Policing

LONDON – This is an extremely complex area, but one that demands attention because policing is something that has a daily impact on First Nations Communities. Creating a secure legislative basis for First Nations police services is the focus of the IIPAC. In other words, a set of laws and regulations would be the foundation for police services in First Nations communities.

The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services is working with the IIPAC to identify policing needs from First Nation Chiefs of Police and community administrators.

Treaty Commission of Ontario

LONDON – Since the IIPAC was established, creating a Treaty Commission of Ontario to settle land claims has been a top priority. A great deal of time and effort has gone toward this goal, but success has been limited. As part of the IIPAC renewal process, the First Nations members have suggested that someone be identified and hired as a Treaty Commissioner of Ontario to take on a two-year fact-finding mission. Someone who is independent of First Nations and the government of Ontario may make more headway.

Resource Revenue Sharing

LONDON – First Nations in what is now Ontario entered into treaty agreements with the Crown and Canada with the understanding that the land and its wealth would be shared among us. The governments with which we created those treaties have not honoured that spirit or intention for sharing. The result has been land disputes, protests, and often violence.

To help avoid further violence and conflict, First Nations and Ontario are negotiating a resource revenue sharing agreement through the IIPAC. Such an agreement would involve distributing a portion of the province's revenue from natural resource developments to all First Nations.

The details of what this kind of arrangement would look like, or how it would be run are still being determined. In the meantime, the IIPAC would like to clarify that a resource revenue sharing agreement would not erase benefit arrangements that individual First Nations already have with companies. Neither would this future agreement take away the opportunity for further benefit arrangements.

Consultation and Accommodation

LONDON – Not only does the provincial government, but also the federal government and development industries have an obligation to consult with First Nations when their activities will have an impact on our lives and our rights. Accommodating First Nations' concerns goes hand-in-hand with consultation. Both are at the core of many issues that affect First Nation people.

Proper and meaningful consultation hinges upon the fact that each First Nation is an independent government, and should be approached in that way. Unfortunately, government and industry representatives do not recognize this government-to-government relationship. Failing to involve First Nations in decision-making is the result of this misunderstanding.

In an effort to bridge the gap, the IIPAC developed a First Nations Consultation and Accommodation Toolkit that allows First Nations to customize their requirements for carrying out discussions with governments or companies. The toolkit is available from the Chiefs of Ontario office. The IIPAC hopes to be able to provide training sessions to support the toolkit in the near future.

AIAI health database development review

by Amanda Doxtator, AIAI Data Coordinator

LONDON – Since 2000, the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians (AIAI) and the eight member Nations (Batchewana, Caldwell, Delaware, Hiawatha, New Credit, Oneida, Tyendinaga and Wahta) have been working on developing a database to collect aggregate data for purposes of identifying program gaps and shortfalls at the community level, as well as to assist with long-term planning. This was a community driven request from the member Nations as a part of AIAI's Health Social Advisory Board Strategic Plan. Currently there are six member Nations that are a part of the database and have successfully inputted aggregate data into the database. With the data collected, we are able to pull current aggregate data from the database.

Since the completion of the data entry phase it was decided by the member Nations of the Association to form an Advisory Committee that would guide the remaining development of the data base. This Advisory Committee will meet every month and discuss the changes they would like to see made to the data base system as well as build a support system between the member Nations, AIAI and the contracted Software Compa-

ny that hosts the data base. The committee consists of one representative from each Member Nation who has a medical /technical background – registered nurse, health clerk or Health Director.

The AIAI health data base will be an invaluable tool for AIAI member Nations. Currently First Nations need to rely on information about their communities that is provided from the government. With the AIAI data base AIAI member Nation communities will have statistical and health information at their fingertips which can be used for community planning, proposal writing and identifying program and service gaps.

The Association and its member Nations are looking forward to the completion of the data base and are working together through the Advisory committee to ensure that a transition at the community level will be as smooth as possible.

The first step in taking back control of our health and health system is to control our health information. We need to keep our information with our communities not with the government.

For more information on the AIAI Health Data Base Initiative please contact the Association at 519-434-2761 and speak with Amanda Doxtator, Data Base Coordinator.



News from Responsible Gambling Program

by Lisa Jackson, Responsible Gambling Program Coordinator

LONDON – Of great and important interest is the announcement that 27 OLG casinos will be getting facial recognition scanners this year as early as May. The reason behind this is that many of the people who have self-excluded (basically barring themselves from the casino) at times do venture back into casinos even though they know they are trespassing. It's the nature of addiction. The addict realizes they have a problem, but total abstinence does not always work.

The new facial recognition scanners will make it easier for OLG staff to recognize gamblers that have signed a voluntary self-exclusion agreement and proceed with enforcing this agreement. The scanners will take a picture of the face of every casino patron that enters an OLG Casino and will electronically compare the photos with those people who have self-excluded. If you have self-exclud-

ed yourself from an OLG Casino in Ontario and do return you can face charges of trespassing which may include fines and a criminal record. The OLG may also decide to exclude you from their casinos for an extended period.

"Addictions, whether it be something that is ingested (alcohol, pills, drugs) or process (shopping, eating, workaholic, gambling, etc) even as they resemble normal human yearnings, are more about desire than attainment. In the addicted mode, the emotional charge is in the pursuit and the acquisition of the desired object, not in the possession and enjoyment of it. The greatest pleasure is in the momentary satisfaction of yearning"¹

For more information on the AIAI Responsible Gambling Initiative please contact, Lisa Jackson - Responsible Gambling Program Coordinator, 519-434-2761.

1. Gabor Mate, "In The Realm of Hungry Ghosts, Vintage Canada (2009):107

McCormick on Aboriginal/Treaty Rights ... cont'd

ened by the provincial government.

At issue is the legal manufacturing of tobacco products on First Nations reserves. A member Nation citizen that owns and operates a tobacco manufacturing plant and is licensed by the government of Canada to do so, has been advised that the company needs to abide by provincial regulations and laws. This, according to the province is what is required for them to sell tobacco products legally in Ontario.

Members of Chiefs Council and I had an opportunity to raise this matter in a meeting with Chris Bentley Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Attorney General for Ontario prior to the Christmas break. The discussion at our meeting ended up being fairly heated but another meeting was requested with the Minister.

The Association has arranged for a meeting with Minister Bentley for January 26, 2010 at Queens Park in Toronto, to further discuss this issue.

The Ministry of Revenue has continued to pursue First Nation tobacco manufacturers and is insisting that they register under the Ontario Tobacco Tax Act, even though they are federally licensed and meeting all federal manufacturing, health and safety requirements.

As Deputy Grand Chief I have sought assurances that no action be taken by the government until we have had the opportunity to meet with the responsible Ministers.

First Nations are dealing with these issues across the country

Recently in Ontario OPP stopped a vehicle and confiscated legal tobacco products from First Nation people and two individuals were charged under the Tobacco Tax Act. There have also been reported seizures in Hobbema, Alberta and in the Cornwall area. Ontario RCMP officers that were interviewed by media, stated that in their view the products were legal and they didn't know why the tobacco was seized. First Nations are fighting for the return of their tobacco products.

The Provincial Government of Ontario is under pressure from large tobacco producers such as Imperial Tobacco Canada Limited and also the Ontario Retailers Association to address what they call illegal cigarettes or "contraband".

The Association is taking the position that the provincial government does not have jurisdiction on reserves

and that our tobacco products are legally produced and traded as the First Nation manufacturers have a federal tobacco license. This is more than a licensing issue it is about our Aboriginal and Treaty rights which include inter-nation trade and commerce. We will be challenging the Minister in his capacity as Attorney General of Ontario to protect our constitutional rights under the constitution of Canada.

Sustainable Child Welfare and First Nations

I am the chairperson for the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians Health/Social Advisory Board (HSAB), which is composed of two representatives from each of our member Nations. There are a number of issues that the board is dealing with but for the purposes of this issue I would like to bring one of the more important matters to the attention of our readers. The Government of Ontario has put in place a "Commission to Promote Sustainable Child Welfare". The Commission was created in November of 2009, and has a three-year mandate to develop and implement solutions to ensure the sustainability of child welfare in Ontario.

On July 5, 2010 the Commission released its first report, "Towards sustainable Child Welfare in Ontario". The report examines Ontario's child welfare system as it stands today and how it's policies, funding and service delivery have grown and changed in the past ten years. The report ends by stating that "the Commissions work now shifts from examining what needs to change to working with the ministry and the child welfare sector to actively plan to realize these changes". One of the findings that was disconcerting was a recommendation to combine child welfare agencies

In reviewing the report I found there was a lack of documentation on the specific issues and circumstances facing First Nations. This was troubling as the report stated that the commission was now moving on. If our problems are not documented in the report then we can't expect them to be resolved at the end of the Commissions work. Mr. John Beaucage, Special Advisor to the Minister of Child and Youth Services on First Nation Child Welfare was invited to attend our H/SAB meeting along with Paris Meilleur another Advisor to the Minister. Mr. Beaucage did accept the invita-

tion and presented the board with the work that he is doing for the Minister.

It was determined by the Health Social Advisory Board that they should meet with the overall Commission that is doing the review on child welfare in Ontario. The purpose was to ensure that AIAI member Nations had direct input into the Commissions reports and findings. Board members Sandra Moore, Ida Cornelius, Helen Tobias, Social Service Director Trina McGahey and myself met with two commissioners and presented information that we felt was pertinent to their report. The meeting went well and I pleased to say that the Association will have a direct contribution into the Commissions next report.

Establishment of First Nation Specific Process in the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy (AHWS)

I was appointed by Chiefs Council as the political representative on the AHWS. The committee had membership from the three other PTOs, Independents, the Native Women, the Metis and the Friendship Centers associations. The committee manages approximately \$47 million in program dollars for First Nation and Aboriginal programs in Ontario.

This arrangement was not in our view a government to government relationship. The Chiefs in Ontario passed a resolution directing the establishment of a separate AHWS governing entity with additional resources that will govern Phrase IV for the First Nations on a government-to-government basis.

A joint committee was established and negotiations proceeded. It became evident in our discussions that the government representatives wanted to change the governance structure of AHWS. First Nation representatives decided to table a draft proposal with the government representatives which was consistent with our mandate. The draft proposal was presented to the Chiefs in Assembly and was accepted by resolution. On December 18, 2009 the proposed model for the formal establishment of a First Nation Distinct Table and Governing Body for the AHWS Phrase IV was tabled with the Government of Ontario along with a request for a meeting to discuss the merits of our proposal by the Regional Chief.. Despite repeated requests by

First Nation leaders to have a meeting no invitation was sent by the province.

Without any consultation with First Nations the provincial government unilaterally made the decision to restructure the AHWS and move towards single year service agreement model.

Under this new model all funding for the AHWS would flow from and be managed by a single Ministry, meaning First Nations would lose managing authority over the program. AHWS programs such as the Health Access Centers will be shifted to the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care, and the current Joint Management Committee model will be dissolved.

This new direction undermines the original purpose and intent of the AHWS, which was that First Nations would eventually take over full responsibility for the management of the programs and finances in the AHWS. The government direction would damage the strategy in several areas which included:

- No government to government relationship
- Takes away the governance authorities included in AHWS
- Changes funding from five year Implementation Agreements to a one year service contract
- It is inconsistent with Ontario's New Approach to Aboriginal Affairs released in the spring of 2005
- Inconsistent with original principles agreed to by government and First Nations that include 'as the co-ordination of programs evolves, and subject to agreed phrasing protocols, full control of the management committee and the resources at its disposal would be devolved to the Aboriginal community'

Each PTO has written a letter rejecting the government's new approach and each organization has committed to fight the governments proposed change to the AHWS, even to go as far as a legal challenge.

At the Chiefs of Ontario Assembly I arranged meetings with the four ministers responsible for the AHWS. I was only able to attend three of the meetings but was able to get a commitment from the ministers that they would meet to discuss the merits of our proposal. Letters have been sent to the ministers reminding them of their commitment and requesting a meeting time.

Ontario begins major social assistance review

by Trina McGahey, Director of Social Services

LONDON – The Ontario government is launching the largest review of the province's social assistance programs in over 20 years. The review is resulting from recommendations from Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), which recommended the government review social assistance with the goal of "removing barriers and increasing opportunity – with a particular focus on people trying to move into employment".

To date, Ontario has appointed two commissioners: The Honourable Frances Lankin, P.C., United Way Toronto's past President and CEO, and Dr. Munir Sheikh, Canada's former Chief Statistician, as commissioners. The review commenced January of this year and is expected to complete its Final report in

June 30th, 2012.

The Social Assistance Commissioners will examine social assistance and its relationship with other federal, provincial and municipal income security programs to gain a better understanding of how these programs when working together, can provide better outcomes for people. This review is Ontario's first step in developing a concrete action plan that will make social assistance:

- More effective at getting people into jobs by connecting them with the right education and training opportunities, while providing security for those who cannot work
- Easier to understand
- Work better with other federal, provincial and municipal income security programs, such as Employment Insurance, and

- Financially sustainable.

Unfortunately, the Ministry's announcement did not include a First Nations specific social assistance review and did not indicate how the Commission might incorporate First Nations into its Social Assistance Review. The Commission's Terms of Reference states that they will be expected to hold separate and substantive discussion with First Nations to ensure that reforms reflect their needs and priorities.

The Association feels that this reference to First Nation social assistance does not go far enough and that only a First Nation specific review of Social Assistance would truly address the major issues within social assistance for First Nations.

AIAI advocacy will aim towards a First Nations specific social assistance

review, which will encourage the Commissioners to engage in direct dialogue with AIAI member Nations. Communication will be vital to addressing on-reserve First Nation Social Assistance which continues to encompass unique and complex needs differing from mainstream society. It is fundamental for the commission to understand and identify First Nations needs in order to develop a plan that will have an impact towards breaking the cycle of poverty on First Nations communities.

First Nations must continue to voice and advocate a message that viable approaches are required, since on-reserve First Nations continue to lack any benefits from Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategies. [www.accesson.ca/en/mcss/]

The Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians gears up for elections under new rules

by Geoff Stonefish, Office Manager

LONDON – The Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians will be holding elections for the positions of Grand Chief and Deputy Grand Chief at the spring Assembly, which will be hosted by the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte. The dates for this election will be confirmed by the AIAI Chiefs Council, but it most likely will be in early June 2011.

Each member Nation is able to nominate one candidate for the position of Grand Chief and one candidate for the position of Deputy Grand Chief. The candidates must be a member of the AIAI member Nation that is nominating them.

The Association's current Grand Chief is Randall Phillips from the Oneida Nation of the Thames and the Deputy Grand Chief is Chris McCormick from the Batchewana First Nation. The upcoming election will be held under new rules that were approved by the AIAI General Assembly in November 2010.

Over the last year, the Associa-

tion's General Assembly mandated a working group to review and make recommendations to amend the AIAI Elections Code. Working Group members were selected by each member Nation and a series of meetings were held to accomplish this work.

The working group consisted of Councillor Gord Peters (Delaware Nation), Chief Joel Abram (Oneida Nation of the Thames), Chief Blaine Commandant (Wahta Mohawks), Councillor Lonnie Dodge (Caldwell First Nation), Laurie Paudash (Hiawatha First Nation), Chief R. Donald Maracle (Tyendinaga), Chief Bryan LaForme (New Credit), Councillor Greg Agawa (Batchewana First Nation), Geoff Stonefish (AIAI) and Rochelle Cornelius (AIAI). The following are some highlights of the changes to the AIAI Elections Code:

- Elections for the position of Grand Chief and Deputy Grand Chief will be held in the same election year and at the same assembly
- No voting by proxy, the registered delegate cannot transfer his/her vote
- A clearer process for nomi-

nations and elections including specific timeline

- A clear appeals process
- Option for the provision of a "scrutineer" for each candidate

These are only some of the changes made to the AIAI Elections code, but overall the code was amended so it outlined clearer election processes and meets the needs of the AIAI member Nations.

As part of a larger mandate the Working Group has been together for two years reviewing the overall Constitution of the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians which has been amended based on the input from this group.

Amendments that were approved at the Spring 2010 Assembly will also have an impact on the upcoming election. The biggest change is the number of voting delegates that each member Nation is allowed to have. Previously, each member Nation's elected Chief and Councillor(s) were considered voting delegates and each member Nation was able to identify a non-elected official as a voting

delegate. With the new changes to the Constitution each member Nation will have a total of five (5) voting delegates. These voting delegates will be determined by each member Nation.

Another change made by the AIAI member Nations is to the position of the Deputy Grand Chief. Currently this position is not a salaried position and is paid on a per diem basis. Starting in the next term, the Deputy Grand Chief will receive a full time salary. This will enable the Deputy to be more involved in the day to day political operations of the Association.

Once the election dates have been confirmed by the AIAI Chiefs Council this information will be sent out to each member Nation. Included in this will be the AIAI Elections code and information on nominations etc.

For further information on the AIAI Elections Code please contact the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians at 519-434-2761 or via email gstonefish@aiai.on.ca.

Office of the Grand Chief ... cont'd

child welfare, taxation, child care, housing and infrastructure, policing, labour, environment and governance, are all subject to the same legislation or policy created by these governments.

Part of our function as the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians is to research what is going on in these areas and provide a report back to our member Nations via the Chiefs Council. Many times (actually too many), this information is gathered through a variety of meetings, workshops and review of new policy documents or research studies that have been released. Our staff attend these meetings, gather the information and prepare briefing notes or summaries of what the issue was, what was being presented and what, if any, response is necessary.

The process that we use, usually involves meeting with various community appointed representatives or staff that deal with the specific issue. For example, AIAI has established an education committee, a Health and Social advisory Board and we are working on a youth council. So when we hear about concerns

with an existing policy or hear of potential changes to that policy, or even the talk of a new one, these are the committees that provide additional work that eventually gets put forward to the Chiefs Council and to the member Nations at our General Assembly.

It is after we have worked with our member Nations, then AIAI can begin to advocate and lobby with governments. Our function in this regard is to inform the government of a collective position regarding the specific issue. I want to be clear...AIAI does not negotiate or speak directly for any of our member Nations. AIAI operates under the notion that our member Nations are the only ones that can speak for themselves.

Our job is to help them understand the issues, the potential impact, and if asked, to help send that message out to governments.

As Grand Chief, I have other responsibilities to work together with the Chiefs of Ontario, and other First Nation organizations and community leaders. It is important that AIAI also understand how these legislative

and policy pieces impact on their communities to ensure that the message is consistent with advancing our collective Rights within Ontario. In this capacity I have had the opportunity to meet with over a hundred different Members of Parliament, Members of Provincial Parliament and Senators to discuss a variety of these issues over the past year. I have made presentations to Federal and Provincial standing Committees on proposed legislation related to Matrimonial Real Property, Taxation, and Water issues.

I have met with a number of Cabinet Ministers to present concerns relating to Child Welfare, Environment, Public Safety and policing, Healing and Wellness, Natural Resources, economic development, youth and Social assistance. Our role as AIAI and my role as Grand Chief is too ensure that First Nations concerns are heard and addressed.

I want to thank everyone for taking the time to read the second edition of AIAI Times.

Grand Chief Randall Phillips

Bill S-11 ... continued

delay or suspend this bill. Afterwards, Grand Chief Phillips spoke to the importance of the meeting and advised, "These Senate members we talked with today now have a far better understanding of the challenges this legislation will create for many First Nation communities. It will create standards that will be impossible to meet, and will end up leaving the jurisdiction and control over water to others".

In December 2010, Bill S-11 was sent to the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples. This committee is made up of 12 senators and they are responsible for reviewing legislation and matters relating to the

Aboriginal Peoples of Canada. AIAI will be preparing a submission in regards to Bill S-11, for this committee based on the results from our community environmental scan that included water as a priority issue. Committee hearings will resume in February with dates and times still to be determined.

For further information on Bill S-11 – Safe Drinking Water for First Nations, and the impacts it may have on your community, please contact Julia Hill, Health Policy Analyst, jhill@aiai.on.ca. Since the call for a federal election, all proposed legislation is effectively dead, but may be re-introduced by the next federal government.

60's Scoop Litigation update

Stolen First Nations children win first round with Ontario Government

by Trina McGahey, Director of Social Services

TORONTO – A multimillion dollar class action lawsuit seeks to sue the Ontario Government for "cultural genocide" over the treatment of approximately 16,000 aboriginal children placed into non-native foster/adoptive homes from 1965 to 1984.

Representative Plaintiffs Marcia Brown, a member of the Temagami First Nation, and Robert Commanda, ties to Dokis Reserve and Garden River seeks damages of \$85,000 for each claimant, which is estimated at \$1.36 Billion.

On October 18, 2010 the Honourable Justice Perell issued clarification that his May 26, 2010 decision was meant to convey the action had been certified or approved as a class action. For the first time in western law jurisprudence, a case will proceed on the basis that loss of culture is and can be litigated as a wrongful

act.

Others who have endured this common experience may elect to register @ ahamilton@wilsonchristen.com at no cost as long as the following applies:

- Placed for adoption or in a foster home in Ontario;
- The placements for adoption or in foster home must have occurred between December 1, 1965 and December 31, 1984;
- The person placed for adoption or in a foster home must be a Canadian Aboriginal; and,
- The placement for adoption or foster case must have involved placement with non-aboriginal persons.

If you require further information on either case please contact Trina McGahey, AIAI Social Director @ (519) 434-2761.

EDUCATION: HEARING OUR VOICE

by Gina McGahey, Education Coordinator

LONDON – First Nations across Canada took to the streets on September 23, 2010 to rally support from the federal government in addressing underfunding in First Nation education. AIAI Member Nation Chiefs and staff participated in planning the rally, setting up a petition booth at the Harvest Festival in London, lobbying MPs in Ottawa, and protested in Ottawa on Parliament Hill.

The Education rally marks AIAI Member Nations continuous suffering of underfunding in Post Secondary, Band Operated Formula, special education and school facilities. It was and still the time for First Nations voices to be heard. The lack of funding continues:

- to deny students a Post Secondary education;
- deny comparable education services to students in community schools,
- the inability to employ long term teachers due to low salaries,
- ongoing deterioration of First Nation schools and
- deny our most vulnerable special education students the services they require to be successful.

First Nation's voices were heard across Turtle Island with a clear message to the federal government on jurisdiction and education underfunding. The messages for the federal government were:

- the need for a change in living up to Federal treaty and fiduciary responsibility;
- to adhere to the principles of the United Nation Declaration of Rights of Indigenous People (UN-DRIP);
- to recognizing the importance of First Nations in Canada's future economy, and;
- to provide education funding comparable to the Provincial governments.

What is jurisdiction? Jurisdiction is and always will be "First Nation control of First Nation Education." It is Canada's legal and fiduciary responsibility for First Nation education as affirmed by the Constitution Act, 1982. It further requires Canada to work in full partnership with First Nations on the "Ownership, Control, Access and Possession" (OCAP) principles that impacts First Nations education programs. It is the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UN-DRIP) Article 14 which affirms "to establish and control their own education system." Supporting First Nation jurisdiction, AIAI will continue to assist Member First Nations in affirming First Nation jurisdiction over the Post Secondary program by securing an auditor to develop a position paper on "status quo with accountability modifications," and to seek a legal opinion on Post Secondary as being a lifelong learning treaty right.

First Nations political message to the federal government regarding underfunding was to assert the recognition of First Nations role in Canada's future economy. In June 2009, the Post Secondary Student Program Target & Impacts report indicated First Nations are the fastest growing population in Canada and will inject \$312 billion dollars into Canada's future economy. Investing funding will build Canada's future economy and further reduce welfare



Chief Greg Peters, Delaware Nation, Rochelle Cornelius – AIAI, Chief Joel Abram – Oneida Nation of the Thames, Shayna Phillips – AIAI, Danielle Hill – Oneida, Carol Hill – AIAI – September 23, 2010, Ottawa Education Rally

dependency and incarceration costs. A letter from Minister Duncan indicated no decisions have been made on a new approach and in the coming months he will inform First Nations on the engagement process. Therefore, Post Secondary remains "status quo" for First Nations.

First Nations delivered a comparability message as well. First Nations education programs must be comparable to the Provincial governments. In order to be comparable, additional funding investments must be made now. The funding formula provided to First Nations schools has only seen an increase of 2% since 1996. On the other hand, the Ontario Ministry of Education recognize the importance of investing now by providing a 50% increase since 2002-03. (MOE Fact Sheet March 2010)

The Ontario Ministry of Education also provided \$687 million for Special Education over the past three years, whereby the federal government's last increase was \$60 million in 2001. (MOE Memorandum 2010 B:5) In addition, \$245 million in capital investment was committed by the Ontario Ministry of Education to implement a full time Kindergarten program. (MOE Memorandum 2010 B:5) For Ontario First Nations schools wishing to implement a similar program, \$600,000 was reprioritized by the federal government.

The Ontario Ministry of Education

funding investment has created better school improvement plans, better teacher effectiveness which leads to better academic student testing results. Unfortunately, for First Nations, it creates a 42% drop out rate, low academic testing results; lack of teacher stability in First Nation schools. These underfunding political arguments must continue to be voiced by First Nations. If not, First Nations children will continue to suffer, students will continue to drop out and potentially be incarcerated and/or dependant on welfare.

It is time to rethink the plan. The Ontario First Nations' plan consist of developing a Band Operated formula that reflects the First Nations actual students needs; an Ontario Early Learning forum; implementing the Special Education funding formula Option 2 for April 2011 and supporting New Credits Human Rights claim on Special Education. Resolutions were passed at the Assembly of First Nations Assembly to implement "Shannon Dream" a public awareness campaign to make the Canadian public more aware of the issues. AIAI staff will continue to work on the education initiatives with Member Nations, Chiefs of Ontario and the Assembly of First Nations with the goal of improving our children's future.

First Nations voice was heard and will continue to be heard. On Parliament Hill a collective voice was heard along

with petitions to the Members of Parliament which resulted in the federal government announcement on improving First Nations education systems. The federal government and the Assembly of First Nations will work in partnership to formulate provincial consultation sessions to complete a program evaluation. The evaluation will focus on Band Operated Formula Funding, Special Education, Education Initiatives and the Education Partnership and Student Success programs. The federal announcement indicated also the extension of current funding levels until April 2013. For First Nations it means education funding will remain as status quo until the new established timeline.

At the Ottawa rally, the Assembly of First Nation National Chief Shawn Atleo strongly voiced, "it was time for the government to step up their investment in education, Ottawa needs to partner with communities and give First Nations children the opportunities they need to get ahead and break the crippling cycle that debilitates so many reserves. This is going to continue until we see change in people's lives in the communities."

AIAI Member Nation Chief Dean Sayers from Batchewana First Nation further reaffirmed directly to the Parliament buildings, "Unfortunately our people are at the threshold. There is going to be things happening this fall, this winter and this spring, that whether or not Canada likes it, will draw the attention of the world."

AIAI will continue the movement expressed from the voices of our Member Nations Chiefs, with the initial planning of a rally in London in the near future. Recently as a result of meetings between Minister Bentley, Minister Meilleur and the Grand Chiefs (AIAI, UOI, NAN, Treaty #3) the provincial government has committed to discussions over the next year regarding the proposed First Nations model for AHWS. AIAI will continue to keep its member Nations updated as new information develops.

If you would like any additional information or would like an update, please contact me at gmcahey@aiai.on.ca.

Ontario plans major changes for Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Program

by Suzanne Nicholas, A/AHWS Director and Geoff Stonefish, Office Manager

LONDON – The government of Ontario is planning major changes in the way that the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness (AHWS) program is currently managed. The plan is to move from the current co-managed system to a single government ministry overseeing the whole program. This was all done with no consultation with First Nations.

The Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians does not support this change, as it takes away from the original intent of the Strategy, and that was to have First Nations provide direct input and control over healing and wellness programs in our communities.

The Association has been working with the Union of Ontario Indians, Grand Council Treaty #3 and the Nishnabe Aski Nation for the past year and half on a plan that would see the AHWS managed exclusively by First Nations rather than the current

management scheme which includes the Province of Ontario and other Aboriginal Service providers. The collective First Nation plan for the AHWS renewal would create a First Nation management table that would oversee the Strategy and still continue with the five year funding agreements with the Province.

The Province has dismissed the First Nations plan saying that their proposed change will provide the best solution to what First Nations are looking for.

We seem to be going in a vicious circle with the government on the AHWS. The AHWS was created fifteen years ago as a result of the government not delivering the appropriate programs to First Nations, and again they seem to be saying they know what is best for First Nation Communities.

Obviously, the Ontario Government hasn't learned from their mistakes. As the old saying goes "Those that can't learn from the past are doomed to repeat it", too bad it will be at the expense of First Nation families.

With the Ontario government's plan the AHWS funded programs will be moving from a 5 year Implementation Agreement to yearly Service Agreements, meaning First Nations will only receive a funding commitment on a yearly basis rather than the previous five year funding commitment. The government has committed that there will be no impacts on AHWS funding levels. AHWS Funded projects have received assurances from the Ministry of Community and Social Services, that funding levels will remain the same for the 2011-12 fiscal year.

The full extent of impacts that the new funding model will have on AHWS funded programs cannot be determined until the agreement is reviewed by AIAI political and technical employees working in the area of AHWS.

For more information on the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy contact Suzanne Nicholas, A/AHWS Director at 519-434-2761 or via email snicholas@aiai.on.ca .