

# Talks planned on independent CAS for reserves<sup>17</sup>

9-10-80  
Discussions about an independent Children's Aid Society for the Six Nations and New Credit reserves will be started by the CAS of Brant, both native councils and the native community.

The CAS board of directors agreed Wednesday night to begin discussions with the Six Nations and New Credit councils.

The aim is to convince provincial and federal governments about the advisability of forming an independent CAS headed by a native board of directors and staffed by native persons.

In a report to the board, local director Ted van Overdijk said

the suggestion was made in light of successful results attained during the past five years at the Ohsweken branch office.

Also recognized, he said, are the legitimate aspirations of the native community to retain and further develop, or in some areas regain, its culture and separate identity.

He said he is encouraged by preliminary discussions with government officials that such an approach will have a good chance of success.

Residents of the two reserves have wanted an independent CAS for several years.

An independent board and society will not only serve the native population on the two reserves, but possibly also serve as a model for development of similar boards in other parts of the province, Mr. van Overdijk said.

The CAS has been involved in child welfare services on the reserves since 1958 under an agreement between governments, the band councils, and the society.

In 1966, all Children's Aid Societies in the province became responsible for the provision of child and family services on reserves. Development and delivery of services was "painfully slow", with most societies failing to de-

velop services relevant to the native population.

Mr. van Overdijk said that, rather than recognizing differences in culture, societies viewed reserves in economic and social terms, regarding them in much the same way as city slums. As a result large numbers of children were removed from their homes, not because parents lacked skills or love, but because social and economic standards did not meet those accepted by "white society".

Many children ended up in foster and adoption homes off the reserves — usually in non-native homes — with disastrous results.

Mr. van Overdijk said it was due only to the sensitivity of the social worker looking after most of the cases between 1958 and 1977 that more children were not admitted to care.

A part-time sub-office was established in Ohsweken in the early 1970s. It increased visibility, but not credibility. Not until 1977, when a full-time branch office was established, did the situation change.

A committee worked to find out from the community what it considered to be relevant services, and by 1978 the original staff had been replaced by native staff members.

Mr. van Overdijk said the results since then have been "nothing short of remarkable."

Considerable strides have been made in allaying fears and suspicions of many native persons, he said. There has been more awareness and more support from the local population, and persons now realize the aim of the society is to support and strengthen families rather than tear them apart.

More importantly, the native staff has been able to achieve the nearly impossible task of reducing the number of children in care to 19 in 1981, from a high of 47 in 1976.

BRANTFORD EXPOSITOR  
BRANTFORD, ONT.  
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