

Youth push for voice on Tewatohnni'saktha board

MEGAN DOLSKI

THE EASTERN DOOR

The road ahead is long, winding and filled with procedural technicalities for Shotehra Rice, but that isn't going to stop him from trudging forward down it.

Rice is asking that a seat (with full voting privileges) be created to allow a youth representative to sit on Tewatohnni'saktha's board of directors, which oversees economic development in Kahnawake.

"They are one of the boards in town that is very isolated and esoteric," said Rice. "I don't think it offers enough diversity."

As it stands, in order to obtain a voting seat on the board, members must (among other conditions) be the owner of a business that has operated for a minimum of three years.

"I think it is very important

that youth have their say," said Rice, noting that many of the issues Tewatohnni'saktha deals with directly affect Kahnawake's younger population.

"I like to be vocal and what I believe in, but the representative doesn't have to me - I just want some youth representation on the board."

Rice first brought the issue to the table during question period at a meeting held this past May.

When requesting youth representation, he specifically addressed his qualms to Bud Morris, Tewatohnni'saktha's chief executive officer.

Morris was unable to be reached for comment, but the commission's communications officer Lisa Lahache said that in order for a youth seat to be officially created, the laws governing the body would have to be modified.

Doing so would require a lengthy process, so in the mean-

time Lahache was able to point to a temporary compromise.

"There is an allowance for ex-officio members on the board and they are to be appointed by resolution," she explained.

She added however, that the laws governing the board require the number of non-voting members to be fewer than voting members, and the body is currently sitting with seven elected, and six ex-officio representatives.

But, Mike Delisle, Mohawk Council grand chief, has put forth a plausible way to make a little room, by giving up his seat to a youth representative.

Though the offer remains unofficial, Delisle was able to offer his reasoning behind potentially stepping aside.

"I believe a youth perspective is always beneficial, especially when we're talking about our community's economic fu-

ture," Delisle said. "The jobs we create and the wealth we attempt to create will be theirs to occupy and manage."

He also noted that as MCK grand chief, he automatically has an ex-officio role on all community boards.

Delisle says some community boards already offer youth seats, whereas others - like Tewatohnni'saktha - currently do not.

"We are in the process of reviewing all boards and mandates in our community to ensure cohesion and identify if there are overlaps," he said.

While the long process of bylaw amendments is tedious, Rice has still been pleased with the reaction to his demands.

"There was no resistance," he said. "They've been very helpful and understanding."