

MISSISSAUGA YOUTH GATHERING

On Friday November 30th, 2012 a number of youth from the 4 Mississauga First Nations of the Williams Treaties gathered together to meet one another while learning about their peoples history and the treaties that we are signatories too.

There was representative from all 4 First Nations with the majority residing from Curve Lake First Nation. In total there were 63 Youth in attendance.

Curve Lake Elder Doug Williams began the gathering with an opening prayer and a smudge with help from Curve Lake Youth Jack Hoggarth. Once everyone smudged with that sacred scent, we began the day.

The first speaker to take the stand was Maurice Switzer, who is a member of Alderville First Nation and is currently serves at the Union of Ontario Indians as the Director of Communications. Maurice has been a journalist since 1965, was the first Aboriginal publisher of a Canadian daily newspaper, and is currently editor of the Anishinabek News.

Maurice presented on the early traditional treaties around the Great Lakes region; he provided a history on important dates such as the Royal Proclamation of 1763 as well as the importance of wampum belts such as the Great Covenant Chain and Twenty-four Nation belt. He explained to the youth, what the wampum belts represent and who was all involved in these early agreements with our ancestors as well as showed the replicas of the wampum belts to show the youth that were in attendance.

After a short nutritional break, we continued on with our speakers...

Dave Mowat, member and Councillor of Alderville First Nations as well as a passionate First Nation historian and well known jazz musician took the stand. Dave touched on his passion of First Nation history, and then he picked up from Maurice Switzer presentation by speaking about the more recent treaties that our Mississauga First Nations are signatories too. Dave displayed a map of the traditional territories of the Williams Treaties communities; he elaborated on recent updates on the Williams Treaties as well as the 1818 Treaty.

Another nutrition break...

Last but certainly not least, Elder Doug Williams is a member of the Pike Clan of the Mississaugas of Curve Lake First Nation. He is also a former Chief of Curve Lake First Nation. Doug is a Pipe carrier, a Sweat Lodge keeper and a ceremony leader. He is a language speaker and considers himself a trapper, a hunter, and a fisher. Doug is the Director of Studies for the PhD program and oversees the cultural component of the program at Trent University.

Doug began his presentation with an edge of your seat kind of story about how our members learned to adapt to continue practicing our traditions after the signing of the Williams Treaties in 1923. Doug continued his presentation with a 10000 year old timeline which provided an eye opening experience to how long our ancestors have been walking on Mother Earth as well as how short of a period the human races on been around. He explained all the things that came before the human races such as minerals and elements that are needed for life, plants and animals; he showed the youth about why we give thanks to all those things that came before us, because without those things we would not exist on this great place we call Mother Earth.

Doug Williams noticed the imbalance in the presenters (all males) that were scheduled for the Youth Gathering so he asked Anne Taylor to speak to the Youth so ensure that there is some balance to the speakers during the event.

Anne Taylor, is a member of Curve Lake First Nation, she also serves at the very important Cultural Archivist of the Curve Lake Cultural Center.

Anne began her talk to the Youth about how First Nations cared about one another no matter who you were. Anne demonstrated an exercise that is utilized by Rod Jeffreys, she began by drawing a small circle in the center of the page, and this circle represented the children of the community. She drew another slightly larger circle on the outside of the first circle; this represented the Mothers, Aunties and sisters of the community which are always caring for that center circle, our children. Anne continued on drawing circle and elaborated on what each circle represented; 3rd circle represented Fathers, uncles and brothers who always watch over and care for our mothers, sisters and aunties. The Final circle represented our Grandfathers and Grandmothers who watch over everyone and guide us in the right direction.

After Anne's demonstration, Doug ended the day with a closing prayer and gave thanks for the good day and food that was provided.

While we were waiting for dinner to be delivered, door prizes were distributed; each youth received a door prize which was either a t-shirts, sweaters, flashlights, braids of sweet grass and toques. Door prizes were donated by Youth Justice Program.

Once everyone had a door prize, the raffle for the 3 larger door prizes began; starting with the XBOX 360 with Kinect Bundle went to Chochi Knott, of Curve Lake First Nation, followed by Meshen Nakogee from Alderville First Nation winning the IPOD 64 GB Touch and Donna Jacobs, of Curve Lake First Nation taking home the 42 LCD HDTV.

Dinner was delivered and the Youth lined up to fill their bellies full of Indian tacos. Dinner was catered by Lisa Wager, Osh Ga Moog.

Once dinner was over, majority of the Youth returned to their communities due to bad weather moving in. The Youth that were able to stay enjoy the dance that was disc jockeyed by Chad Taylor, member of Curve Lake First Nation until 10 pm.

All in all, it was a good start to building stronger relations between our Mississauga First Nations Youth while empowering them about whom they are and where they come from.