

Six Nations history program introduced

Posted By KAREN BEST [CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER](#) October 24 2008

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A void in recounting Six Nations history in elementary schools may be filled with a new native curriculum initiative.

"It's important to see the world from the perspective of aboriginal people," said the president of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO).

For decades, text books presented a European view of aboriginal culture, pointed out David Clegg. The very important difference with the Six Nations Iroquois Clans Program is that it is a product created by an aboriginal person based on their own culture, he added.

"It's not a resource from a third party," he noted. "It's authentic."

Several weeks ago, the clans program was launched in Brantford after months of development. Research was conducted and content was reviewed by independent parties to check for accuracy, said Zig Misiak, who with Raymond Skye, a Tuscarora of Six Nations, created the teaching program.

Representatives with the ETFO attended preliminary meetings to discuss it and encouraged and applauded their effort, said Clegg. A copy was reviewed by professional federation staff.

Not only will the program fill a gap in the recounting of history but it will foster understanding, according to Misiak and Clegg.

The ETFO president said students who live in a diverse province need to understand different people. "The native community is an important part of the population," said Clegg.

"This program is so timely (especially) for our area up and down the Grand River," said Misiak, who lives in Brantford. Students will get to know who their Six Nations neighbours are, what they believe and how their political system operates, he added.

Lack of understanding breeds fear and fear leads to disruption and unpredictable results, he pointed out. This program will help dissipate tension, Misiak p>Along with enlightening students and filling a gap in history, the program just happens to match the elementary curriculum so it can get into the system and help, he noted.

The program incorporates Six Nations stories of creation, history of clan formation and the Peacemaker and establishment of the Haudenosaunee Six Nations Confederacy.

Created in a matriarchal system, clans are all about families and are linked into how Six Nations history evolved, explained Misiak. On the foundation of the clan system the Confederacy was established.

Teaching materials are geared for grades 3 to 7 but can be used in high schools. Post secondary schools have also indicated an interest, said Misiak.

Due to its scope, the program can be used for history, art, music, geography and other subjects. It also fits with a curriculum directive on finding common ground and character development, siak.

Previously teachers used their own resources to incorporate aboriginal issues into lessons so this program is helpful, timely and easier for them to use, said Clegg.

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