

Not what they expected

Indian Chief's visit shocks Baldwin kids

By Linda Kirby
A visit from Indian Chief Jim Skye, for most children, is quite a shock. "They don't believe I am Indian," said the Chief with a smile on a recent visit to Robert Baldwin School in Milton.

Meeting with approximately 73 grade three children from the school and 20 grade three students from W. I. Dick School, the Chief was greeted with plenty of enthusiasm. Many were indeed surprised to note he wore the

same clothing worn by their fathers, with the exception of a hand-made belt and medalion, symbolic of his ancestors. The Chief, who is from a Brantford reserve, answered questions on his family, his home, and on the schools in

the Indian reserves. His five children attend school for the same amount of hours, study basically the same subjects—just like any other student—do homework, he told the group. The hour was spent discussing similarities between children of white people and Indians. The Chief noted most children have a concept of Indians derived from television, movies and history books which dwell on the past way of Indian living.

"That is basically the reason we brought Chief Skye to speak with the children," said Michael Hopwood, a grade three teacher at the Baldwin School. "The kids are very impressive at this age, and the way the books depict Indians, children don't really have the opportunity to understand today's way of Indian living."

Asked whether he celebrates Thanksgiving and Christmas, Chief Skye explained that although the Indians have a different religion and worship a god called "the creator," Christmas is celebrated at the same time of year. Thanksgiving is celebrated maybe 10 times during the year, he told the children, each time whenever there has been a good crop and there is reason to give thanks. The timing does not really matter, he said.

Just like any other suburban area, his family lives in a house and not in a teepee. A speaker for the Woodland Cree Cultural Centre, based in Brantford, Chief Skye travels to various Ontario schools, and has also lectured in the United States. A member of the six nations, Chief Skye's ancestors go back to the Onandaga race, which has its own language. As well as speaking his native tongue, Chief Skye also is fluent in Cayuga and Mohawk, the latter presently taught in the public schools in the reserves. Unfortunately, said the Chief, only 20 minutes a day is spent teaching the Indian children their native language, when really half a day is necessary. Chief Skye remembers when he was attending school on the reserve how he was punished when found speaking his native tongue by the Indian teacher. Although the Woodland Cree Cultural Centre provides tours for school children, the Centre rarely sees other Indian children coming to visit. Both W. I. Dick and Robert Baldwin schools are involved in native Indian studies, and the visit from Chief Skye was the second, following a visit from a Canadian couple last week, who spent several years living in an Indian community in Inuvik, located in the north western corner of the North West Territories. Mr. and Mrs. Russell Buie, now retired, visited Robert Baldwin School to talk about

their experiences. A regional inspector of education, Mr. Buie explained how the main school had 53 rooms and housed 1,200 children. Most Eskimos and some Metis children, the students are flown into the school in September and flown home in June. All students stay in two hostels. According to the Buies, the school system is changing, with a drive to decentralize schools. The courses of study are similar to any other public school in Canada, with courses selected from the Alberta school system. Housing in the region, however, is a major contrast to those children are accustomed to in the rest of Canada. The government homes, the Buies informed the children, have hot and cold water, as well as many other modern facilities. Equipped with a utility room, a pipe standing four feet above the ground goes to every house in the survey to provide hot water. "The children certainly have an opportunity to learn something," stated Mr. Hopwood, adding the visits had

proven so successful last year, the school had requested the speakers to return.



INDIAN CHIEF JIM SKYE explains his medallion to Antony Colson, a grade three student at Robert Baldwin School during his visit with approximately 100 students. The children were most impressed by the fact the Chief no longer wears the colorful costumes they had hoped to see. According to the Chief, many children find it difficult to believe he is an Indian.

New high school set for 1979

Halton Board of Education approved plans Thursday to spend \$5,400,000 on a new high school in Milton to open in the fall of 1979. Trustees approved a three year capital forecast and the funds for the new high school for 900 students, including 400 vocational, has been set aside for 1978. The board has also set aside \$250,000 for three elementary school sites in the proposed Timberlea and Valleyview neighbourhoods. The purchase of these sites in Milton is scheduled for 1978. The addition of a general purpose room and conversion of the existing general purpose room into a library at Fairview school is slated for 1980. This project is expected to cost \$352,000. Purchase of sites and Fairview upgrading will be financed through the sale of

unneded school sites and closed buildings while the new high school project will be financed by debentures.

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