

# A week of Native Awareness

## Meech Lake called a slap in face to Indians



**Traditional dress**

This young native girl was all dressed up for the occasion at the pow-wow Saturday afternoon, part of the first annual Native Awareness Week in Midland.

Traditional garb was the rule of the day at the pow-wow, held at the Huronia Indian Village, Huronia Museum.

The Meech Lake Accord was "an insulting slap in the face to all Indians", according to an official with the Union of Ontario Indians.

"To come along and do something to bring Quebec into the fold, and do nothing for the Indian people in the same breath was devastating," said Allan Roy, membership facilitator for the UOI.

Roy spoke to about 15 band-members last Wednesday at a workshop on native rights and self-government, held at the Georgian Bay Native Friendship Centre on Midland Avenue.

Roy supported the concept of "a third order of government", native self-government.

Indians across the country should stand up for their rights, said Roy and, if necessary, disregard Canadian laws which restrict their nationhood.

"There is no reason why we can not act like a nation again," Roy said during a discussion on self-government.

Many at the workshop were concerned about the effect a native self-government law might have on benefits they now receive from the federal government.

But Roy pointed out that the current Indian Act (which regulates almost every aspect of their lives) is "no good" and has to be replaced by something. And the best solution, he said, would be self-government.

However, he warned the government would "love to get rid of its trust responsibility" to the Indians.

"The only thing we have that's different from other aboriginal peoples in the world - whether it's the Laplanders in Scandinavia or the Aborigines in Australia - is they don't have treaties like we have in Canada," said Roy.

"The government would love to get rid of those treaties tomorrow. Whether they sign a self-government law or not, they're gonna do it anyway," he remarked.

Native rights are in constant danger of erosion, and must always be fought for, said Roy.

He pointed to examples

of Indian bands in the United States which simply ignore laws restricting them from running bingo and otherwise controlling their own lives on the reservations.

While he warned the group to stay away from bingo, he said a band in California flew straight in the face of a law when it ran its bingo games and became quite rich. "We are a nation inside the State of California," Roy quoted the band as declaring.

"As soon as you start doing that, you put a big X through legislation," he said.

Roy added that there are still "millions of acres of land under land claims" yet to be resolved. Those

claims should be resolved before Indian self-government is implemented, he noted, so the natives would have "a base to conduct our lives".

Along the same lines, Roy said Indian bands right now should be standing up to the government when it comes down to determining membership.

There has been a lot of confusion since the Indian Act was amended to make it conform to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Bands are now in a state of limbo as to who is and who isn't a member, Roy pointed out.

But in the end, the individual bands should all draft their own rules of membership.



**Intertribal dance**

Indians from far and wide converged on the Huronia Museum in Midland last Friday and Saturday for two exciting pow-wows. Here, Roger Jackson of the

Georgian Bay Native Friendship Centre helps lead the grand opening of the Saturday afternoon pow-wow.

## Workshops reveal native life

An Indian looks at a tree and says, "Hi brother". A white man looks at the same tree and says, "Hmmm... I can chop it down, sell it and get \$1,500 for it."

That symbolizes the difference between the native people and the European settlers and their descendants, according to an Indian elder who spoke at a workshop last week.

"Indians co-exist with the animals," said Fred Wheatley of the Parry Island Indian Reserve.

They don't worry about money; they only worry about their fellow man.

"That's why we'll never be millionaires," said Wheatley, who was in town to participate in the first annual Native Awareness Days. He held several workshops at the Georgian Bay Native Friendship Centre on Midland Avenue.

His Friday workshop centred on the cycle of life and education, but strayed into other, general topics.

For instance, he spoke about the Indian's use of humor as a healing agent.

"When you go to visit an elder you are supposed to have something funny to say," he noted. "To the In-

dian, humor is healing, it is always in the native home."

"If there is no humor, something is wrong."

The elder told the small group how, when he was younger, he went to the mountains to fast for four days with the elders. "After I fasted for four days I found something," said Wheatley. "I found there was nothing in this world worth worrying about."

He said he found much of what he was looking for when he fasted. "Why they (the Europeans) called us savage and pagan I'll never know. Why did they say we should drop our ways of life and take the white man's religion?"

Fittingly, the group ended the session by telling jokes:

There was an Indian selling arts and crafts at a show. A white man walked up and looked at a piece of art with a \$50 price tag on it. He offered \$25. "No way," said the Indian. "\$30," said the white man. "No, the price is marked," said the Indian. "I'll give you \$40 - take it or leave it," said the white man. "Forget it," said the Indian. Another Indian leaned over and said, "We should have done the same thing with Manhattan."

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**VICTORIA HARBOUR OPEN HOUSE**

The Council of the Village of Victoria Harbour cordially invites its ratepayers to a press conference to be held at the Village offices on Wednesday, the 2nd day of September, 1987 at 7:30 in the evening.

The purpose of this public meeting and press conference is to inform all residents of the results of engineering studies done of the water requirements for Maple Street and service requirements of the John Dillingno study area, together with council's development plans for the area.

Ratepayers will be given an opportunity to ask questions regarding the development plans.

Donna Thatcher  
Clerk  
Village of Victoria Harbour

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