

## ROOTS + WINGS

HAPPENINGS AT ST. PHILIP'S  
ANGLICAN CHURCH, MILFORD

### Justice and Equity in First Nations Education

By Paula Walker & Fran Larkin

Shannen Koostachin was a resident of At-tawapiskat who, at age 13, started a national campaign for safe and comfy schools and culturally based education for First Nations children and youth. Tragically, Shannen died in a car crash in May of 2010 when she was only 15, but her campaign continues under the name, "Shannen's Dream".



To paraphrase Bishop Peter Mason's welcoming remarks, "We come out to hear some speakers because we want to. We come out to hear other speakers because we need to. I suspect that this evening's address falls into the latter category."

Dr. Marlene Brant Castellano, noted Canadian aboriginal educator, writer, speaker, recipient of many national service awards - including the Order of Canada, and an unyielding advocate for the rights of First Nations Peoples had a mighty, if disturbing, message for those gathered at St. Philip's Anglican Church in Milford, Ontario on June 7th. Quietly passionate and sometimes emotional, she articulated the history of a sadly deficient education system for aboriginal children.

Thankfully the emotionally scarring residential schools have gone. However, in many First Nations communities the current educational facilities are sub-standard. Compared with off-reserve pupils, First Nations students receive between \$2,000 and \$3,000 less per person per year in educational funding. Run down buildings with inadequate heating and washroom facilities, never mind the lack of a

library, computer and science labs, or a gymnasium are common in remote areas. Teachers are frequently inexperienced new graduates from the south with no knowledge of the history or culture of the children they teach. They stay a year or so then move on to better working and living conditions somewhere else.

Often no secondary schools exist in more remote communities so children are sent off to centrally located high schools. If they have had a poor academic beginning, many native children lack the basic skills to cope with high school level work. Far from home and family in a culture they can't relate to and struggling to manage their workload, many just give up - tragically, some take their own lives. The drop out rate for native youth is 50%. What a terrible waste of all that potential!

The issues of First Nations Peoples, including education, are not simple and have been further complicated by government indifference and broken promises. Money gets thrown at the problems haphazardly, but no cohesive plan, or means of evaluating programs, has been worked out in collaboration

(Continued on Page 15)



Mariners Park Museum - July 7

#### "1812 Market"

**Free Admission!**

11 am to 4 pm

Marble Games & Appraisals

Shipwrights BBQ

Silent Auction

Duck Decoy/Fish Lure Display

& Appraisals

Children's Games

Knot Making & Chair Caning

Spinning & Basket Weaving

Carving demonstrations

Shipwreck Videos - "Ducks Diver"

#### Fish Fry Dinner:

Opens at 5 pm / dinner served  
at 6 pm

Wine & beer for sale

**Music by The Frere Brothers**

Adults: \$20

Children (under 10): \$10

Silent Auction, Laura Secord  
dessert, Costumes are  
welcome!

**Reservations Required**

613-476-8392