

# Chiefswood curator

By RONALD RAEBURN

Mrs. Arnold D. Hill is the curator of Chiefswood.

On weekends and holidays Mrs. Hill is busy guiding tourists through the Johnson home. But on weekdays she has time to talk with visitors, not only about Chiefswood and Pauline Johnson, but also about Indians and their way of life.

She is concerned with the lack of knowledge about Indians that visitors display. Some visitors expect to find woven baskets and bearskin rugs in the home.

Mrs. Hill explains: "Chiefswood is an opportunity to see how much English culture had influenced the Indian way of life more than a century ago."

When people come face to face with her as an Indian, they usually become defensive in their conversation. "They will refer to me as anything but Indian." This annoys her. She is proud to be an Indian and to break the ice with her guests she'll exclaim, "I am a fierce Iroquois."

She is not at all fierce but a likeable, urban woman who cherishes her Indian ancestry. She is opinionated but makes no apologies for this. She wants whites to accept Indians on their own merits.

Talking to Mrs. Hill had just this effect.

Because they valued their connection with the British, and especially the crown, they left America at the time of the revolution. Mrs. Hill says the British would have lost the war of 1812 without the loyalty and active support of the Iroquois.

For Mrs. Hill the reserve is home. However, she has spent many years travelling with her husband throughout the United States. He still travels frequently as an engineer with Trans Canada Pipelines.

The Hills wanted a permanent home for themselves and their family and decided to though part of her desire was that her daughters would marry Indian boys.

Her personal feeling about her identity as an Indian has not carried over to the same extent with her daughters. She told me of an incident that occurred one day as she and one of her daughters were out driving. She pointed out an Indian boy to her daughter and said, "There's a nice young brave."

Her daughter replied, "Brave what?"

A visit to Chiefswood and a talk with Mrs. Hill is an interesting and educational way to spend an afternoon.