

Headdress business

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OHSWEKEN — With a few turkey feathers and some buckskin lace, Barb Bradley has tickled the likes of former hockey player Johnnie Bucyk of the Boston Bruins, and an Elvis fan in Italy.

Mrs. Bradley's headdresses have travelled the world despite her small operation on the Six Nations reserve. Although she has made hundreds of headdresses in the past 20 years, she speaks fondly about the one that went to "The Chief" on the day of his retirement from professional hockey in 1980.

"He wasn't even native, but I feel very proud about that one."

She also displays a photograph of the headdress she made for the H.M.S. Brave, a British Royal Navy ship. The full headdress still stands in a glass case on the ship. She says another special moment was when 15 members of the Six Nations Veterans Association donned her creations during a visit by Queen Elizabeth II to the Mohawk Chapel.

Each one is unique; made with different colored feathers and intricate beadwork on the headband.

One time Mrs. Bradley's daughter Lorraine spelled out Elvis in the beadwork for an Italian visitor to the reserve who had a child back home in love with the king of rock 'n' roll.

Currently she is making one for representatives of the City of Mississauga for a presentation during their

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visit to Japan at the end of May.

With a \$9,500 grant from the reserve's new Touch the Sky Business Centre, her part-time business, jugged between raising a family and working as a medical driver for Health and Welfare Canada, is expanding to a full-time operation that will employ three of her daughters.

Self taught

Mrs. Bradley plans to build a shop at her home for additional workspace and to store the necessary materials including: feathers, felt caps, buckskin laces, ermine and rabbit skins and beadwork.

She says she also will use the money for advertising. Her prime customers will likely be museums and craft shops in Ontario.

She says she is the only one in the area that makes such elaborate headdresses. The price is \$250 for a 29-feather headdress, but a custom-made piece with special beadwork and animal skins will cost more than \$500.

"There are cheaper ones out there but they are made cheaper. I haven't seen a headdress yet that is finished like ours."

She taught herself the art of headdress-making after watching a man from the North American Indian Club in Rochester, N.Y.

"I was really intrigued with them; I just loved them," she says. "It's such a great feeling to start with nothing and eventually come out with something that beautiful."

Her daughters, Shelley, 27, and Lorraine, 33, will be employed by the business full-time while her other 30-year-old daughter Dawn will work part-time.

"We want to keep the culture going. Once we get the business going we hope to set up classes for small children. We'll teach them how to make a headdress, even if it's one feather at a time."

The long headdresses are made in the style of Plains Indians from Western Canada. They are the traditional pieces that people most often associate with natives.

But Mrs. Bradley says once the business starts she wants to learn how to make the headdresses for the different Six Nations tribes.