

Native conference may be

historic

OHSWEKEN — What promises to be an historic gathering of native people is scheduled to take place at McMaster University in Hamilton at the end of this month.

Called Drumbeat Indigenous People's Conference, it will feature well-known native leaders from all over North America and even Chief Davi Kopanewa of Brazil. The Brazilian rain forest, which is being threatened with destruction, is his home. Because this rain forest supplies so much oxygen to the atmosphere, it has been called "the lungs of the world."

I recently received a conference schedule from my daughter, who is a member of the McMaster First Nations Students Association. My eyes almost popped out at the outstanding lineup of speakers. I can hardly wait to hear Chief Bernard Ominayak of the Lubicon Nation and Edward Laboucan, a Lubicon elder. They have been waiting for over 40 years for title to some of the land they have lived on from the time before the Europeans arrived.

Chief Daniel Ashini will speak for the Innu of the Labrador region who want the Canadian Armed Forces and NATO to stop using their land for low level fighter jet training. It terrifies their babies and children, scares away animals they are hunting and changes the migratory routes of birds,

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such as ducks and geese and animals, such as caribou.

Donald Marshall Sr., Grand Chief of the Grand Council of the Mi'kmaq (Mic mac) and his son, Donald Marshall Jr. should have interesting things to say. Donald Marshall Jr. was the man who was wrongly convicted of murder in Nova Scotia and spent 11 years of the prime of his life in prison. By the way, the real killer, a white man, spent only one year in jail for that murder.

Chief Adrian Esquino Lisco of El Salvador in Central America is another speaker who should be worthwhile hearing. Until recently I did not even know there were still lots of native people in Central America, speaking their native language and following their ancient customs. In the last couple of years we at Six Nations have been visited by Central American refugees who recognize us as native brothers.

Other speakers will include Thomas Banyacya of the Hopi Nation from the U.S. Southwest and Miles Richardson of the Haida Nation in British Columbia. There also will be several speakers from the local Six Nations Iroquois People. They will include the Secretary of the Hodenosaunee Confederacy, Tom Longboat, Jr. The great marathon runner, Tom Longboat, Sr. was his father. The Hodenosaunee Confederacy is now called the Six Nations Confederacy of the Iroquois. Confederacy translator, Robert Jamieson, Confederacy Chief of the Seneca Nation (one of the Six Nations), Hubert Buck and John Peters of the Six Nations elected council will be speaking also.

It is fitting that the hosts of this conference is the Hodenosaunee Confederacy. Conference organizer is Dawn J. Hill a McMaster student from Six Nations. She can be contacted at 416-525-9140 extension 4729. There will be no admission fee to this conference. Conference dates are April 29, 30 and May 1.

Our Town is an Expositor feature which provides a forum for news and views from some of the smaller centres in the region. George Beaver, a Six Nations reserve resident, was a teacher and principal on the Six Nations and New Credit reserves for 33 years.