



GEORGE
BEAVER

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Six Nations Tourism co-ordinates many programs involving visitors to Six Nations Territory. These visitors often ask questions which the workers at Six Nations Tourism are not able to answer.

In order to better inform its own workers, and also the Six Nations public in general, Six Nations Tourism organized an all-day workshop during the recent March Break.

The workshop, which was called Ogwa Nigoha (Our Minds), was envisioned as a gathering of mature Six Nations people with various points of view. It was hoped that from their answers to various questions posed to them, the staff of Six Nations Tourism and the public who attended would become better informed.

'SHORT' WELCOME

The workshop opened with a breakfast served by the Six Nations Figure Skating Club as a fund-raiser. At a little after 9 a.m., Huron Miller officially opened the gathering with a traditional welcoming address. It was a short version but

Workshop explains Six Nations history, customs

even so, it lasted for about 15 minutes.

He later stated that the long version of the Thanksgiving Address could take up to one hour and 20 minutes. This version would probably be used on very important occasions.

Mr. Miller is a traditionalist who is quite knowledgeable about both the Six Nations Confederacy and the Longhouse religion. He is also the organizer of the Pow Wow held at the Six Nations Fair each September.

Because he spoke a native language other than English, one of the first questions posed was to inquire what was being said in the opening address.

He explained that when we give thanks, we start with the earth and things on the earth, such as water (rivers, lakes, etc.) Then we acknowledge and are thankful for the medicines (plants), the grasses, the flowers and the fruits which our mother, the Earth, gives us.

Then we move on to the insects, (bees, etc.), the four-legged brothers which provide us with meat and our winged brothers, whose leader is the eagle.

Next to be remembered is the four winds, when the Thunderers who come for the West in Spring

bring the rain and awaken the Earth from her long winter's sleep.

We have progressed in Our Thanksgiving from the Earth to the sky where we also acknowledge the sun, the moon, the stars, the Four Messengers from the Creator and finally the Creator himself.

This was the explanation of what is said in the Thanksgiving Address.

SIMILAR DISCUSSIONS

The rest of the day was spent in a similar way with explanations and discussions of many other topics related to Six Nations history and customs.

In the evening after supper in the dining hall, there was a "social" which included Iroquois-style singing accompanied by water drums and rattles.

Many of the 50 to 60 people who attended during the day expressed an interest in a similar workshop in the future. The 70 to 80 people who kicked up their heels in the evening seemed even more happy to have a repeat performance.

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 is a freelance writer who lives on the Six Nations reserve.