

Haldimand Treaty helped Six Nations keep its identity, clanmother says

By Angelina Thomas-Bear
Staff Reporter

"They were scary, they were diseased, they were helpless. We didn't send them back, we took care of them.

"We fed them, cleaned them, and

remember it with her

At 96 years young, Mrs. Sandy is as sharp as a tack and probably sharper than most half her age.

She spoke fondly of past celebrations marking the treaty, when "it was a bigger deal and people cared



Sylvia Sandy

made them well again."

Retired schoolteacher, Sylvia Sandy at 96 years-old is the only Six Nations member to mark the anniversary of the Haldimand Treaty.

The 220 year old document gave lands along the Grand River to the "Mohawks and such others" that wished to reside here.

And it gives us our roots and reminds us of who we are, she says.

Sylvia began an annual pot luck supper in 1971 marking the anniversary of the Haldimand Treaty since 1971

Because of illness, this year, she couldn't attend at the community hall so instead, opened her home Oct. 26 to all who wished to

more than they do now."

As for the European and British assimilation on Turtle Island, "she becomes emotional and recounts history.

"They killed every native they could on the island. We weren't like that. We were civilized."

She says The Haldimand Treaty was written by Capt., Joseph Brant and Sir Frederick Haldimand was governor at the time.

Signing it, she says, was a way for Six Nations to get recognition by law for their support of the British during the American Revolution and maintain the covenant they had with the British.

She said after shaking hands on it, Brant told Haldimand he would name the treaty after him since he



Local residents gather to mark the anniversary of the Haldimand Deed at clanmother Sylvia Sandy's Chiefswood Road home.

signed it.

She said the treaty outlined specific issues for Six Nations.

She said "Natives were not to be taxed. Maybe I wouldn't even be here if it weren't for the Haldimand Treaty, maybe none of us would."

It was a small but animated crowd who were welcomed into the comfortable Sandy home for a pot-luck supper of corn soup, squash, roasted fowl and ham, mashed potatoes/gravy, biscuits, fresh fruit pies, lemon meringue cake and coffee.

It was evident that this home has had plenty of celebrations in the past, displaying decorations, art

and gifts like a small but cheerful museum.

Though Mrs. Sandy taught special education for the first 15 years of her career beginning with kindergarten, she said the hardest thing to do was "to stand up for myself, there was not much support in those days for women."

A residential school survivor herself, she says she remembers the first day at school. "We (the Indians) were all mistreated from the first day on. They wouldn't let me take piano lessons, as a woman or as an Indian."

She said she picked it up on her own "when no one was looking."

She's a writer but probably a procrastinator as well, remaining unpublished saying, "I don't want to be published right away. I'll do it later."

Besides teaching, Mrs. Sandy spoke of helping people out in other ways.

"I helped people out if I could. In those days there were no banks, no financial help available and if I could help anyone out, I would. Some were good for it and some not but I didn't chase anyone for it. If they paid me back, okay. if not I just let it go, didn't bother them for it, I guess they needed it"