

Natives using technology for long-distance school



Jason Martin, 24, works on an electronic pad as he works towards completing a course in forestry management.

OHSWEKEN — Inside a log cabin just west of the village, Sault College of Sault Ste. Marie holds classes.

There are no teachers, blackboards or a even a classroom.

Instead, there are three students and a small telephone speaker: the source of a crackling voice that explains how to solve a math problem. There is also a big computer screen that appears to be magically writing out the problem.

But it's not magic, it's technology.

This is an electronic classroom and the three students in the college's "Ohsweken Campus" are connected by phone lines and computer screens to 38 other students who are dotted around the remote regions of Northern Ontario.

The instructor is in Sault Ste. Marie.

Each student has an individual microphone to use to ask questions. By writing on an electronic pad with a special pen, the students can write on all the screens.

The three men are in the middle of one of their classes for a three-year diploma in forest and wildlife management. They will finish the courses without travelling much further than Cambridge.

The three men — Derek Lickers, Jason Martin and Wayne Martin — spend three days a week in the class and two days working in the field, either in Ohsweken or with the provincial Ministry of Natural Resources.

Rob Moore, Six Nations forester, said they hope to stay in the community to help manage resources after graduating.

Band council is paying for the education, he said, adding there is a shortage of people trained in resource management in Ohsweken.

Nov. 1993