

Haldimand Treaty marks 231 years of Haudenosaunee history

By Donna Duric
Writer

It's been 231 years since Joseph Brant successfully negotiated the Haldimand Proclamation and Mohawks and Haudenosaunee people settled on the banks of the Grand River.

The history that's unfolded between then and now made for a lively, humorous and entertaining discussion during an anniversary celebration Sunday afternoon in the Sports Den at the Six Nations Community Hall. About a dozen community members gathered for the quaint celebration that centered around an afternoon tea and lunch.

It was a time to celebrate, to tell stories, listen and learn from each other as they discussed the creation of the "country" of Six Nations of the Grand River. "It's the day that represents to us the day we came to Six Nations," said organizer Terrylynn Brant. "To me this is our founding day. It's the day that our country here at Six Nations

was established and we know we are a country. We don't have to look to anybody else to tell us who we are or where we come from and what we stand for."

There were fascinating discussions about the history of different locations on the reserve, who lived there, the characteristics of "upper enders" and "down belowers" and how modernity has changed the practice of dropping in on friends and visiting - for a coffee or tea and to talk and reminisce and listen and learn from each other about who and what it means to be Haudenosaunee from Six Nations.

The afternoon's entertainment - Carson Williams - kicked off the celebration and had the group in stitches with his original musical poetry-comedy numbers.

Equipped with only a guitar, his voice and his wits, Williams performed a number of original songs he penned himself; story-

telling in humorous singing about being Onkwehonwe from Six Nations.

The group also spoke of the time capsule planted underneath the Haldimand Proclamation monument at the front of the Community Hall and the contents inside.

Among some of the items inside the time capsule are a copy of the Turtle Island News, and a long piece of wire attached to two old broom handles that the late Nina Burnham used to slice large pieces of cheese. "Can you imagine, 100 years from now, when it's opened, people will wonder what the heck that is," pondered Brant.

Also in the time capsule is a flag from the reclamation site in Caledonia and a copy of Turtle Island News' historic pictorial magazine capturing the events of 2006 and the April 20, 2006 OPP raid of the former housing subdivision. While sipping tea and nibbling on dainty treats, the group had fun discussing

various topics, and answering questions written on pieces of paper at each table.

Some of the questions included: What is the annual event on Six Nations that makes you the proudest; who is the most regal Six Nations person; and do you believe the terms upper ender and down belower still hold significance.

Six Nations' annual Bread and Cheese event and mid-winter ceremonies were among people's proudest annual events.

Pauline Johnson was regarded as the most regal Six Nations citizen to have ever lived and there was a lively discussion about what it meant to be an upper ender or down belower; some seniors recalled when they were younger they were even forbidden from dating or befriending the other. Another question posed was how to deal with development along the Haldimand Tract.



Local teacher and Mohawk Seedkeeper Terrylynn Brant marked the 231st anniversary of the Haldimand Deed with a special luncheon Sunday. (Photo by Donna Duric)

Community member Wes Elliott said unity is central to dealing with developers. "In this territory we're split with band council which is a minority government (and Confederacy council)...in my opinion, we need to reverse 1924 first so we have only one (gov-

ernment) Confederacy that developers are dealing with because Ontario doesn't want to deal with us, Canada doesn't want to deal with us, developers don't want to deal with us...if you want to defeat developers, you've got to be united."