

Pink Shirt Day Presentation: Be the Change!



By Mari Reeve

OHSWEKEN – On Wednesday, February 25th Six Nations celebrated its 3rd year of participating in Pink Shirt Day. Begun in a Nova Scotia highschool in 2007 as a response to a Grade 9 being bullied for wearing a pink shirt on his first day of school, the wearing of pink shirts has come to stand against all types of bullying.

In Six Nations a group of professionals in community building and healing put together a powerful presentation about bullying and visited grades 4, 5 and 6 at local schools J.C.Hill/Jamieson, Kawenni:io, Lloyd S King, Emily C. General and I.L.Thomas.

Their message was simple and beautiful: Be The Change. That means standing up against bullying, walking away from people trying to gossip, and not engaging in bullying of any kind.

One of the organizers, Danielle VanEvery, Community Educator at Ganohkwasra, acted in all the role-plays for the youth and explained that the theme was about “reinforcing the positive, and bringing kindness back into our community so we can be powerful.”

In total, nine talented individuals within the community put their heads together to devise a half hour presentation for the elementary youth. Lance

Logan Keye, Youth Justice Worker at Six Nations Grand River Correctional Services, began the interactive presentation with a Creation Story.

Explaining the struggles between the left handed and right handed twin, hinting that we all may have a bit of both twins inside of us, but that we must choose to be positive, Keye described the tragic birth of the twins, their battles growing up together, and their final battle concerning who should take care of creation.

After the story telling, the rest of the group played out 3 different scenarios, first allowing the situation to play out negatively, and then ‘re-doing’ the sce-

nario, choosing a positive response to the situation instead. The actors included Brittnay Thomas and Barb Rowe from Six Nations Child and Family Services, and Brody Thomas, Brandon Martin, Jami Lee VanEvery, Amber Silver-smith and Dion Jonathan from Ganohkwasra.

The first scenario depicted a bus ride home after school, involving online bullying as kids on the bus used Facebook pictures to make fun of people. The negative scenario showed them insulting people on Facebook while the rest of the group laughed and joined in.

Lance Logan Keye, acting as the narrator, paused the scene, and

asked what kindness looks like. The youth replied “Be The Change!”

The positive scenario showed kids praising Facebook pictures, saying how happy and pretty their peers looked, while also noting that we should not talk badly about people when they are not around to defend themselves. There was laughter in the audience and the youth were giving their full attention to the scenario.

The second scenario showed three cousins hanging out at Grandma’s house, while one girl was very distressed because her mother was hospitalized for depression. The first, negative response scenario showed the girls

blaming one another and finding fault with their families for the turmoil.

The scene was paused and started again with a completely different, positive response. The cousins talked kindly with one another, explaining that depression is not like a cut, you cannot see blood or a scar so it is hard to know someone is in pain. The cousins did not blame one another or their families but offered an ear to listen and a shoulder to cry on, wishing for the mother to receive the care she needs.

Lastly, the group showed the young audience what bullying can look like in sports. The group was playing Lacrosse and was asked to

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pair up, leaving one kid alone and isolated because no one thought he was skilled enough to partner with and lacked quality sports equipment.

The skit showed that more experienced players may not encourage players of all skill levels, and also showed that some kids may feel left out if they don't use the 'right' brand of sporting equipment. *With the positive spin of playing Lacrosse, we saw the experienced players offering pointers and help with practice after school. All youth were including in playing Lacrosse and all skill levels were supported with enthusiasm and sportsmanship.*

After the scenario demonstrations, discussions were held with the youth in the large group setting. Brittney Thomas says that her main goal in being involved was "being able to make our faces look familiar so that the youth know us and can utilize our services."

More conversations were and around how to stop bullying, treat all people with respect, resist the pressure to be a bully, and try to keep a good mind. All youth involved were given pink t-shirts with the phrase: "Love Among Us: Be the Change" as well as a design that included the words: Respect, Caring, Sharing, Peace, Good Mind and Kindness.