

# Youth art show opens for Community Awareness Week

By Lindsay Monture

**SIX NATIONS** – Community Awareness Week included a special arts event this year celebrating the works of six aspiring young artists from Six Nations. Initiated by Elizabeth “Betts” Doxtator, the Group of Six Youth Art Show was held this past Sunday at the Irquois Village Plaza.

The group started with Betts reaching out to the community for support to engage Six Nations youth in the arts.

“I approached Larry Longboat about supporting a grass roots-based youth art program. After negotiating with Six Nations Child & Family Services, they agreed to cover the costs including paint, canvas, and brushes,” said Betts, who volunteered her time and use of her shop at the plaza as a studio to work in on Wednesdays after school leading up to the show. “It was aimed to see if there was interest and if there was support, maybe to plant a seed. There are so many activities that young people can participate in, but sometimes they just might not be your particular interest. So this was a bit of an alternative.”

The artists — Frankie Warner, Imani Mitten, Kendall Jacobs, Evan Lickers, Kaya Hill and Chris General — remained anonymous up until the show.

“We just thought it would be fun to reveal them at the show. We haven’t even showed any of their art on Facebook,” said Betts, who had been thinking about the initiative for a year and faced some obstacles in facilitating the group. Finally at the end of February, Betts and the Group of Six were given the go ahead to make it all happen. From there on, they advertised the event through word of mouth and through their event page Group of Six Youth Art Show on Facebook.



Chief Ava Hill supported the Group of Six by giving them a pep talk before their grand opening. The Group of Six includes Kendall Mitten, Chris General, Evan Lickers, Imani Mitten, Kaya Hill and Frankie Warner. PHOTO BY ELIZABETH “BETTS” DOXTATOR

“The objective is to provide a safe place for them to meet and create. That’s why support from the community is crucial! Encouragement and guidance from the community members could help these aspiring artists set bigger goals,” said Betts.

The artists had received a lot of support from the community, including Elected Chief Ava Hill, who gave them all a pep talk prior to the opening. With built confidence from all their hard work, they greeted the public, who enjoyed having such a unique event included in Community Awareness Week. The group had their paintings, greeting cards and small posters of their works for sale. Most of their paintings were sold. The event also included a youth caterer providing food and refreshments.

“We need to keep our young people involved to

let them know that we care about them, that we love them. Even if it’s one person at a time for bead class, dance, sewing, language, take them by the hand one by one if that’s what it takes,” said Mary Jacobs, a Seneca artist from Cattaraugus who was an inspiration for the Group of Six.

Betts emphasizes that the focus of the work and the event was to provide more support for the youth in the community by sharing artistic skills. “Provide basic skills to do something like paint, to work in

a group, to speak clearly, to make a decision about what subject to paint, time management, even taking care of the painting supplies,” said Betts. “Their logo is six paintbrushes tied together to symbolize unity. They have worked together, provided support to each other, and encouraged each other. As a group they have demonstrated unity within this small group. It was amazing to watch!”

“It was an opportunity for these young people to show how dependable and hardworking they are,” said Betts. “Community Awareness is an opportunity for agencies to show the services available. This was an opportunity to showcase what the youth can do, let them be stars!”

**TOP PHOTO:** The Group of Six’s Logo is six paintbrushes tied together, unifying the six artists who worked together, supporting and encouraging one another. PHOTO BY ELIZABETH “BETTS” DOXTATOR