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Laurier hosts High School Friendship Lacrosse Tournament

WATERLOO – Wilfrid Laurier University will host about 90 high school students from Six Nations for the third annual High School Friendship Lacrosse Tournament, taking place on Laurier’s Waterloo campus Thursday, Oct. 25.

Six Nations and New Credit high school students will come to Laurier to tour the campus, meet with Laurier students and members of the Laurier Aboriginal Student Association, and have a skills training session with professional lacrosse coaches from the Iroquois Nationals Lacrosse Team and the Haudenosaunee National Women's Lacrosse Team.

“This is an opportunity for Laurier to develop relationships with local First Nations people, to encourage First Nations students to consider university as a future path, and to create awareness of Aboriginal peoples and culture among Laurier students, staff and faculty,” said Jean Becker, Laurier’s senior advisor: Aboriginal initiatives.

The day begins at 9 a.m. at University Stadium, with an official welcoming happening at 9:30 a.m. From 10 a.m. until noon students will break into groups for skill testing. During lunch, guest speakers will address the students: Crystal MacDonald from the Haudenosaunee National Women's Lacrosse Team, and Dan Kennedy and Cara Loft, co-presidents of Laurier’s Aboriginal Students' Association.

Lacrosse scrimmages, evaluations and door prizes will take place from 1:45 p.m. until the end of the day at 3 p.m.

The First Nations have been playing lacrosse, also called *baggataway* or *tewaarathon*, for more than 500 years. Lacrosse is an integral part of native culture, and Canada’s official national sport.

“Maintained as a central part of Aboriginal cultures for centuries, lacrosse is more than a game; it is regarded as a gift from the Creator and has ceremonial purposes,” said Kandice Baptiste, Laurier’s Aboriginal students recruitment and retention officer. “In Aboriginal communities lacrosse is introduced early to youth and can be a powerful tool to teach values, build character and help learn a healthy lifestyle.”

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