

Students Learn Respect for the Earth

Ted Shaw, Birchbark Writer, OWEN SOUND



Danny Beaton has been following the Red Road for 15 years.

Photo by: Ted Shaw

Danny Beaton, a 49-year-old Turtle Clan Mohawk of the Six Nations Confederacy, came to Owen Sound at the beginning of May, at the invitation of the M'Wikwedong Native Cultural Centre. He was asked to give a presentation at St. Mary's High School on the "the North American Native Perspective of the Sacredness of Mother Earth."

He arrived carrying a big pack and with his traditional flute over his shoulder in a sling. The end of the flute is shaped like the head of the raven.

This was a travelin' man. He has travelled far with his message: Europe, Japan, and all over Turtle Island.

In his introduction, Beaton said, "For 15 years, seven days a week, I have travelled and studied with Native spiritual leaders." The Elders have taught him about peace, respect for the Earth, and the spirituality of the waters, land, and life. Also, the traditional ceremonies of the circles, and of water.

Beaton has made four documentary television films portraying this, the most recent being *The Iroquois Speak Out For Mother Earth*.

These teachings are what Beaton came to share.

On the evening before going to the school, he undertook a sweat lodge ceremony in a secluded part of the city, on grass and surrounded by trees.

At the school there was an audience of about 60 students. With words, song, and the traditional cadence from his flute he portrayed the message of the Elders.

On the previous day, the school librarian, Ed McCain, had died of cancer. He was 39 years of age. Beaton linked hands with the audience and offered a prayer to the Great Spirit. They all hugged each other.

The students had made necklaces of beads, porcupine and wolf claws. They presented these to Beaton. They also gave him a buckskin jacket that had taken them two weeks to make. Teacher Gino Ferri said, "he was quite blown away," by it.