

# EDUCATION

## "Kano:ron ne Onkwawen:na

### Tewahkwisron Tohsa Ionkwatons"

On March 30, students from the Akwesasne Freedom School were invited to what they thought was going to be a school play at the elementary school in Kaneshatake. Instead, what it turned out

to be was an extraordinary event. In celebration of Aboriginal Language Day students and staff of Rotiwennakehte and the Kanien'keha Immersion School, located next to the federal school, along with

Kaneshatake community people performed in a series of plays and sang songs entirely in the Kanien'keha language.

A welcome speech was given by Kanerahnehawi Nicholas of Kaneshatake,

and M.C. for the evenings' events was Karonhiano:ron McDonald, formerly of Akwesasne.

The Ohen:ton Karihwate:kwen was recited by the Rotiwennakehte students and staff and was immediately followed by a play called "Ohkwa:ri Iotewirarakwen". Kawennenhawi Nelson 8, whose mother, Arisawe, teaches at Rotiwennakehte, who had the lead role in the play is one of the very few young fluent Mohawk speakers left within the school system and the Kaneshatake community.

A song known to the Akwesasne community as the Mohawk Song - Tewahsenthos ne Akwe:ri was sung by Rotiwennakehte staff comprised of five beautiful ladies who performed better than the Supremes.

Kevin Nelson, a student

of the Kaneshatake federal school, gave a message to all in attendance to help keep the Kanien'keha language alive and well. It was heart warming to see a child so young recite such an important message in the Mohawk language.

Tiorahkwathe Gilbert of Kahnawake was invited as a special guest to be a part of the evenings' events and he performed a series of songs in Kanien'keha which he wrote himself. He uses his own words but he sings to the tune of popular songs such as Hank Williams tunes, the Star Spangled Banner, and other types of music.

Although the Akwesasne Freedom School students were not on the schedule for the evening they were so enthused by the turn of events that they too wanted to take part. For a group who had very little time to practice they were great. The students sang three songs they learned at AFS called "Onontakonshon

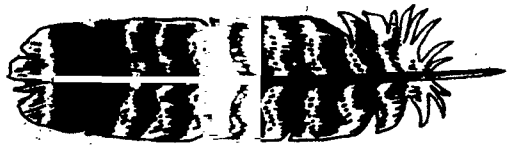
Na'tekion" (She'll be coming 'round the Mountain), "Tehahonhtaneken Na'kia'to:ton" (I'm a little rabbit), and "Kana'tarokhonwe", (Indian Corn Bread).

They were very well received and the audience was extremely impressed by the fluency of the children and by how outgoing and proud they were to sing in Kanien'keha. It was a chance for the AFS students to strut their stuff and share their language with peers.

Other plays which were performed that evening were "Naho:ten Teshonkwawi ne Shonkwaia'tison", Kontiwistano:ron, Tsi Rontorishenta:khwa ne Rotikstehonok'a, and to conclude the wonderful evening the entire cast sang "Wakatshennon:ni tsi Konkwehon:we.

The special night was the 2nd aboriginal language day play and the

Kaneshatake school(s) staff members are hoping to make it an annual event to further promote the Mohawk language. This year there was more cast involved than last and much more of a turn out. For those interested in obtaining video tapes of the plays they can be purchased at the Resource Center in Kaneshatake. The address is - Tsi Ronterihwanonhnha ne Kanien'keha, 85 A:kweks, Kaneshatake, P.Que. JON 1E0 or you can phone (514) 479-1651. The fax number is 479-1939. All proceeds go towards helping the Kanien'keha Immersion Program at Rotiwennakehte School in Kaneshatake.



Rotiwennakehte students and staff reciting the Ohen:ton Karihwate:kwen. The students made their costumes for the play...Ohkwa:ri Iotewirarakwen.



From Left to right are Nihahsenna:'a, Kawennahente, Sa'telokwen, Iohonwa'a:wi, Kawenniosta, Tsiehente, Wentine, Ietsistohkwaroroks, Karonhiotha, Teioswathe, Iawentas (behind Teioswathe), Konwahontsiawi, and Arohiale.



Rotiwennakehte teachers performing Tewahsenthos ne Akwe:ri. The beautiful background scenery was painted by local artist Katsi'tsakwas (Ellen) Gabriel.



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