

The Westend Weekly

Bringing Communities Together



Box 66, Rainy River, ON POW 1L0 Ph. 852-3815, FAX 852-1863, e-mail: westendweekly@tbaytel.net - Serving the District for 17 years VOL. 18, NO. 50 Wednesday, March 31, 2010
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Hugh Dennis honoured with farewell dinner



Hugh Dennis with Chief Jim Leonard and several youth who participated in the Rainy River First Nations Community Addictions Program and who made and presented Hugh with traditional shirt.

by Marlene Deschamps

On Tuesday, March 23rd, a farewell dinner was held to honour Hugh Dennis. His position will cease to exist when the funding for the program comes to an end on March 31st. Around 70 people attended the dinner and later, the presentation held in the Townshend Theatre. There were slide shows running in the cafeteria where people were visiting and eating and also in the theatre. Dinner was some great tasting spaghetti, salad and buns and three different slab cakes all prepared by Kathy's Katering.

For just over three years, Hugh has been the coordinator of the SAPT program. He has worked hard with various agencies, service clubs, municipalities and schools to spread the message of the dangers of various addictions, the prevalence of these addictions in the district and the help that is available out there. Many people have seen Hugh and some of his many volunteers manning booths at conventions, trade shows, symposiums, conferences and anywhere else he was allowed to set up shop in order to inform people. Dennis intends to take a well earned vacation for a few weeks but will return and no doubt be involved in some way in what he sees as a war on drugs that

must be won.

There were several people who paid tribute to Hugh on this night. CN Police Officer, Pete LeDrew was emcee and spoke of his great respect for this man, all his hard work and his ability to garner support and volunteers for their programs. One of those was Bob Swing, Chair of the Safe Communities, who's help was elicited by Hugh. Bob let the audience know that Hugh had a big problem with new technology and it was a standing joke amongst those at the NWHU who worked with him as well as others. To assist Hugh with this problem Bob presented him with a Mac and Blackberry he would have no problem handling-this was because the Mac was an apple and the Blackberry was actual blackberries. Constable Anne McCoy also paid tribute to Hugh and spoke of what an inspiration he was to all those who knew him and worked with him. She dubbed him the 'giver of hope' and said that if they could get renewed funding for SAPT they would seriously consider bringing him back on board. She then gave Hugh a tray of peanut butter squares, courtesy of Tess' Kitchen. Tess provided squares for their meetings and apparently Hugh tried unsuccessfully (sometimes) to have the entire tray for himself. She then, along

with LeDrew, presented Hugh's wife Robin with a bouquet of flowers and special thanks for being understanding about Hugh's commitment to the program that took up many hours. Rainy River First Nations' Chief, Jim Leonard next went up on stage and brought with him some of the youth who participated in the Rainy River First Nations Community Addictions Program. They presented Hugh with a traditional shirt that they had made and requested that he put on. After Hugh donned the shirt he received a big hug from each of the youth. This brought tears to Hugh's eyes and as he turned away some could hear him say "This is what this is all about", indicating the main reason he took on the job as coordinator in the first place. Next up was Treaty #3 Police Cst. Brian Major who after making a few jokes at Hugh's expense presented Hugh with an eagle feather. He explained to Hugh that this is the highest honour paid to someone and is only given to persons who have accomplished something far beyond the norm such as the inspiration given to the young people that had proceeded him up onto the stage. Then the mike was turned over to Hugh.

Hugh Dennis was somewhat teary eyed when he took the mike to speak of his past years working with and coordinating SAPT. He spoke of the team he worked with and how the communities working together showed how hard work helped them accomplish good things. He told the people to get on board with those striving to keep SAPT going although it would probably be somewhat different it would still be effective. He spoke of the great benefits and joy of working with young people and how great the "PhotoVoice" project became and how much the small achievements from that project inspired those to go on to greater efforts. He said he thanked everyone from the bottom of his heart for the tribute and that it would never be forgotten. Hugh then went out to the cafeteria area to visit with the people he worked with these past years and with the youth who wanted to capture this moment in time for their memory page.



Hugh holding the eagle feather presented to him by Treaty #3 Police Cst. Brian Major. Other picture is of Hugh and his wife Robin.

Annual Sobriety Pow Wow held on Rainy River First Nation



Two year old Meymeynoosh (All of Creation) from Roseau Reserve, Manitoba with her grandfather, Kelvin McIvor from Sioux Valley, Manitoba both of whom danced on Saturday.

by Marlene Deschamps

Elvis DeBungee was a very busy man over Saturday and Sunday as Rainy River First Nation held it's annual Sobriety Pow Wow. He played with the Manitou drum group while others came from White Earth and Leech Lake, Cass Lake and Ponemah in Minnesota; Dakota Tipi in Manitoba and Edmonton, Alberta. Dancers came from these same places as well as Sioux Valley, Roseau Reserve, Kenora, Couchiching and other areas in Northwestern Ontario. Early on the first day the fire was lit outside for drummers to warm their drums. It was explained that by warming the hides on

the drums, there was a deeper, warmer sound when the drums were played plus it allowed for the previous songs to be removed in order to make way for the new sounds. Elder, Gilbert Smith, was the emcee for the Pow Wow.

The two day affair saw many dancers and drummers come together to celebrate sobriety as well as community. Diabetic friendly bannock made from sweet potato and stew was provided by the Chief Instructor from Seven Generations Cooking program. He gained the Iron Chef title at a conference in Thunder Bay recently and anyone tasting his food can easily see why. The bannock

went over very well and people went back for seconds, thirds and in some case fourths so they could bring some home for other family members to enjoy. This first Pow Wow is a real family affair as the dancers range in age from around 2 years to well into their 70's or older. It is common to see grandparents travel with their grandchildren to this event and getting them involved in the traditional dances from a very young age. Elvis and his committee of volunteers did a great job again this year and people left with fond memories of catching up with old friends and meeting new ones.

Community Living Way of the Cross



Participants in the Community Living Way of the Cross as they started out from Knox United Church.

by Marlene Deschamps

On Monday, March 29th, believers from the various faith communities participated in the Living Way of the Cross which began at 7 p.m. at the Knox United Church and ended at St. Mary's. There were more than 20 persons of all ages who took part in this inter-church event during Lent.

Led by Father Wayne the group prayed at 14 locations, each one representing a station of the cross. At each station there was a call for prayers for

those represented by the location ie: the churches-prayers for clergy; courthouse-those involved in justice matters; the town hall-those involved in working for the benefit of all citizens. The prayer was followed by a reading, reflection and the singing of Kumbaya led by Gerry Guimond. The wooden cross was passed among the people so that each could have a chance to carry it during the 14 station visits.

The 14 Stations were: Knox United Church; Library;

Courthouse; Town Hall; Business Section; The Mill; the Jail; Fort Frances Clinic; Nelson House/Front Street Manor; Sister Kennedy Centre; USA/Canada Border; Shore of Rainy Lake; Hospital and St. Mary's.

This is the 2nd annual Community Living Way of the Cross and those organizing and participating were pleased with the turnout and with the mild weather that accompanied them on their Way.



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