



makes you think

media release

Aboriginal education: past, present and future explored as TVO's *Your Voice* visits Thunder Bay for two-part special beginning Tuesday February 10, 2009

- TVO brings its online discussion series for parents to Thunder Bay's Fort William First Nation Community Centre to examine issues in Aboriginal education with an expert guest panel
- Two-part special to be streamed online at tvoparents.com Tuesdays February 10 and 17 at 9 pm ET, and broadcast on air Sundays February 15 and 22 at 6 pm on TVO

Toronto, January 29, 2009 – Aboriginal youth is one of the fastest growing segments of Canada's population, yet still has one of the highest dropout rates in the country. And according to the 2006 Census up to half of Canada's Aboriginals aged 25 – 64 have less than a high school education. Is this the legacy of the residential school system and the mistrust that it generated? How does education in Ontario today need to change in order to rebuild trust and give Aboriginal students a greater chance at success?

This February, *Your Voice*, TVO's discussion series for parents at tvoparents.com, will head to Fort William First Nation Community Centre in Thunder Bay to examine what and how Aboriginal students learn, and the role of education in the protection and preservation of the Aboriginal culture.

Presented in two half-hour specials (streamed online at tvoparents.com Tuesdays February 10 and 17 at 9 pm ET, and broadcast on air Sundays February 15 and 22 at 6 pm on TVO), the *Your Voice* programs are hosted by Cheryl Jackson and bring together teachers, social workers and community leaders together with parents and families.

Part 1: Past Perspectives and Present Challenges Tuesday February 10 at 9 pm ET at tvoparents.com (Repeated Sunday February 15 at 6 pm on TVO)

Cheryl Jackson and guests will bring a social and historical perspective to Aboriginal education in Ontario: How many students are there? What does the education system have to offer to on-reserve and off-reserve populations? What historical context do kids bring with them to school? And what are the challenges to keeping kids in school to graduation? Confirmed guests include:

- Dolores Wawia, professor at Lakehead University's Department of Aboriginal Education and co-chair of the Aboriginal Advisory Committee for the Lakehead Public School Board. Wawia is a survivor of the residential school system and was the first Aboriginal woman in Northwestern Ontario to obtain a Bachelor of Arts and Masters in Education.

Part 2: Solutions for the Future Tuesday February 17 at 9 pm ET at tvoparents.com (Repeated Sunday February 22 at 6 pm on TVO)

Cheryl Jackson and guest experts look at people making a difference in Aboriginal education, and at innovations aimed at establishing respect for Aboriginal culture in schools and pride in Aboriginal students. The panel will discuss initiatives such as blending Aboriginal programming into school curriculums, funding support and other solutions. Guests include:

- Ron Kanutski, a parent and social worker in the Thunder Bay area. Kanutski is a self-proclaimed cultural teacher who volunteers in his kids' school, giving lessons in Ojibwe history, music and art. He also works with parents to help them overcome their mistrust of the school system and instill confidence in their kids.

- Jo-Jo Guillet, an Aboriginal resource teacher for the Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board. Guillet has advocated tirelessly for the integration of Aboriginal materials into schools and advises teachers on how to integrate Aboriginal culture into lessons.

Viewers can interact with each other and share their views on issues raised in the programs in a discussion forum at tvoparents.com.

For more information, please contact TVO Communications.

About TVO

TVO is Ontario's public educational media organization and a trusted source of interactive educational content that informs, inspires and stimulates curiosity and thought. TVO's vision is to empower people to be engaged citizens of Ontario through educational media.

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