

Exchange students have a day of winter fun

By BONNIE AUBERTIN
For The Standard

Saturday morning brought 97 Rotary International exchange students to Mississauga First Nation's Dream Catcher Complex.

Roger Daybutch gave a fascinating discussion on his Native culture and tradition. Daybutch was taught by the elders of his community about his history, his family and his place in life. He has lived in the Mississauga Village, off and on, for 29 years.

Daybutch spoke to the students with an eagle feather in his hand. The eagle feather represents wisdom, truth, respect and understanding. The eagle is also the messenger of his people to the Creator.

"It is nice to see our young people showing appreciation of different cultures," says Daybutch. "We have a distinct relationship with our Mother Earth. We have four colors to represent the races of people; red, black, white and yellow. The Creator put each culture here for a reason."

At the end of the discussion, the Rotary Club presented Daybutch with some tobacco in appreciation of his time.

"It is one of the highest honors among the Anishnabe people to bestow upon another,

the offering of tobacco," says Daybutch. "When I leave here, I have a responsibility to honor this tobacco. I have to go up and make a fire, or go out in the woods and give thanks for this tobacco.

"In honoring it, I will sprinkle some back on the earth. So I take this tobacco with a great deal of honor. And on behalf of Mississauga First Nations, we thank you for coming here. Our doors are always open."

Robert Villeneuve of the Rotary Club in Blind River, welcomed the students to a hot lunch at the Blind River Community Centre. The lunch was provided by Saint Saviours Anglican Church.

Students from all over the world gave their names, where they are from and where they are going. The students came from Canada, USA, Turkey, Japan, Mexico, Switzerland, Brazil, Denmark, Bolivia, Norway, Poland, Thailand, Russia, Ecuador, Germany, Spain, Sweden, Finland, Argentina, France, Croatia, Hungary and Austria.

Following the lunch, the students headed out to The Lodge, where they were able to choose from a number of fun-

filled afternoon activities. Some picked cross-country skiing, snow machine rides, and snow soccer, while others chose snow shoeing, ice-fishing, and warming themselves by the bonfire.

Hannah Rodgers from Sweden and Lisa Hemming from Finland, enjoyed their day of fun. "I love the fire," said Hannah. "You can see the ground under the snow."

Many of the exchange students have never seen snow, but with their energy and excitement, they kept comfortably warm.

"Every three years we get the kids in Blind River area," said Bea Jensen, a volunteer for the day. "The kids will go one year to Wawa, one year to Sault Ste Marie, and one year here in Blind River."

"We have one more orientation this spring," said Dave Marshal, coordinator of events.

It will be held in Cadillac, Michigan the first weekend of May. There is a lot of work to do then.

"We council the kids on home sickness, culture shock, handling money, that kind of thing. There is a lot of preparation before sending a student off."

The students spent the weekend with host fami-



Rotary exchange students hug to keep warm during an outing at The Lodge this past weekend. Inset: Elina Korhonen of Finland collects pins. She brings plenty from her homeland to exchange with other students she meets, during her Rotary exchange travels. The students hail from around the globe.

lies.

"Basically, people volunteer year-to-year," said Villeneuve. "Now that we've hosted this conference for three to four years, they look forward to it. We simply call back previous volunteers and go from there."

Debbie Rivard, of Blind River, was host to three girls; two from the USA and the other from Japan.

"I recommend anybody who's never hosted before, do it. We had a great sleep-over and the kids are all great," said Rivard.

Bev and Jay Goudreau, also of Blind River, were hosts to two

girls: One is from Sweden and the other is going there.

"The weekend was great. I'll do it again next year," said Jay.

"Tonight, my wife is crocheting with one of the girls."

Cynthia and Marc Bradford, of Blind River, were hosts to one boy and one girl. Matko Maravic is from Croatia and Celine Cruz is from Michigan, and she will be going to Croatia.

"I absolutely enjoyed the weekend," said Cynthia. "You don't have time to do anything special though, they are kept pretty busy. They had a Valentine's dance to go

to on Friday at the high-school.

"I think it's one of those worthwhile things we should probably get more involved in. They really are a good bunch of kids. I would absolutely do it again."

Students were paired-off with one out bound to a country and the other coming from that country. This gave the students a chance to talk to each other about their different cultures.

Early Sunday morning the students piled on two charter buses and were on their way back home after a fun-filled weekend, thanks to the hospitality of the community.