

Education initiative expanding

Former prime minister Paul Martin launched the Martin Aboriginal Education Initiative in Thunder Bay five years ago. It's now in 17 Canadian schools. In Manitoba, it's in Children of the Earth and Gordon Bell high schools in Winnipeg, Major Pratt School in Russell, Oscar Lathlin Collegiate on Opaskwayak Cree Nation and Grand Rapids School. Martin was at Gordon Bell Friday morning. The MAEI hired aboriginal teachers to develop textbooks for Grade 11 and 12 business courses

— entrepreneurship, marketing and accounting — incorporating aboriginal culture, traditions and ways of learning. Small classes of students selected by the principal take the one-semester credit course. In public schools, provincial governments and school divisions help finance the program, which includes teaching teachers the curriculum, while private donors help cover costs on reserves. Manitoba's Department of Education is providing \$30,000 per public school. For more information, visit www.maei-iam.ca.

Pilot project entrenched

Waywayseecappo First Nation and Park West School Division will sign an agreement May 27 to entrench a current pilot project in which Waywayseecappo School has joined PWS. A handful of First Nations have contracted with Frontier S.D. to run reserve schools, but Waywayseecappo and Park West have an apparently unprecedented partnership that shares decision-making. Aboriginal leaders say Ottawa provides reserve children with 20 to 30 per cent less funding per

student than students receive in provincial public schools. Yet, when reserve children go to a public school, or a reserve school signs an agreement with a public school division, Ottawa pays the going rate. Per-student funding has soared for Waywayseecappo students during the project. Students have smaller classes with access to more learning materials and resources such as specialist teachers and counsellors.

— Nick Martin



Students in the Martin Aboriginal Education Initiative present a star blanket to former prime minister Paul Martin during a school assembly at Major Pratt School in Russell Wednesday.

The new business model is traditional

Former PM touts aboriginal-education program

By Nick Martin

RUSSELL — Isaac Brandon is a really bright youth from Waywayseecappo First Nation who's come up with an idea for a pen that carries extra cartridges for emergency injections of insulin.

Paul Martin was impressed. The former prime minister doesn't impress all that easily.

But here were Martin and Brandon in the same classroom of Major Pratt School Wednesday, the fifth anniversary of the Martin Aboriginal Education Initiative, and Martin was in Russell for the formal official launch of the local program, which began in January.

An affable and avuncular Martin moved immediately into teaching mode.

"What's the first advice you'd give Brandon?" he asked the class of First Nations students.

Patent it, someone said. Martin slowly revealed the answer: Brandon needs to prove no one else had previously had the idea.

"Skylar, would you use this?" Martin asked student Skylar Seaton. "Do you know, in fact, it's not going to do more harm than good? How do you do it?"

Over the next 10 minutes, Martin led the students through the realization the product must be medically approved, government-certified, then advertised and promoted through doctors who would recommend it to their patients.

"How would you price it?" asked Martin. That question led to all kinds of learning about material costs, the costs of research and development, manufacturing, advertising, labour and everything else that goes into business decisions.

"The concept of the course — teaching entrepreneurship, marketing, accounting — that in itself is not new," Martin had explained earlier. "None of this has ever been offered before to aboriginal Canadians, or, as we understand, to indigenous people anywhere."

Martin's project assigned aboriginal teachers to develop aboriginal textbooks and lesson plans that incorporate aboriginal culture and traditions.

At an assembly at Major Pratt, Martin told the students that prior to European contact, trade flourished from the Far North to the Gulf of Mexico along enormous trade routes. There was manufacturing of pottery and other goods along with a massive agricultural industry.

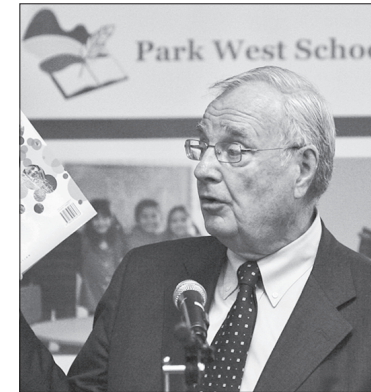
"For reasons that are inexplicable and unfair, First Nations and Métis were shut out of the economy. First Nations and Métis have business in their blood — you have a huge history behind you, and it's a history of success," he said.

The idea of the business-oriented project is to keep young aboriginal students in school and offer them another path that could lead to post-secondary education and a career.

Just this week, Martin flew to Montreal, Lethbridge, Fort Simpson, The Pas, Grand Rapids, Russell and Winnipeg to promote the program.

He said it's up to aboriginal leaders and education authorities to invite his program into the community.

In Russell, Park West School Division and Way-



Paul Martin hopes his business course offers students another post-secondary option.

wayseecappo First Nation will sign an agreement May 27 to entrench a pilot project, believed to be unique in Canada, in which the reserve's nursery- to-Grade 8 school becomes part of the school division, and is funded at public school rates, while the band is a partner in all decision-making.

"There is absolutely no excuse for the federal government not to provide education funding," said Martin, adding he thought it was appalling Ottawa funds reserve schools 20 to 30 per cent less per student than children in the provincial system.

"That's immoral, and it's also economically dumb," he said.

Martin, the renowned slayer of deficits, is a little less emphatic when asked why he didn't eliminate that school-funding gap in his nine years as federal finance minister and his nearly 27-month stint as prime minister between 1993 to 2006. His Kelowna Accord would have done so, he said, referring to the agreement with provinces and native leaders reached in late 2005 just before his government fell.

Working together is essential, Martin told students in Russell.

During his time in the western Manitoba town, Martin was bubbling over with praise for Manitoba's Department of Education, and particularly for deputy education minister Gerald Farthing, who Martin said should be sent on a lecture tour across North America to talk about improving education opportunities for aboriginal youth.

"If we do this right," Farthing said in Russell, "the skills and knowledge that students leave with will be relevant. There is so much more we can do if we work together."

The Waywayseecappo and Park West partnership "is a model the rest of us should pay attention to," said Farthing.

"The Department of Education in Manitoba, I can't speak more highly of it," Martin said. "The innovation they've brought to aboriginal education is remarkable."

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An Invitation to Attend

KEYASK
Hydropower Limited Partnership

Keyask Public Involvement Program: Round Three

The Keyask Hydropower Limited Partnership is proposing to develop the Keyask Generation Project, a 695-megawatt hydroelectric generating station at Gull Rapids on the Nelson River in northern Manitoba.

Round Three of the Public Involvement Program has been planned to provide information about the format and content of the Environmental Impact Statement, discuss how input received to date influenced the Project assessment, communicate any supplemental information since the filing of the Environmental Impact Statement with regulators in 2012, and document what is heard. You are invited to attend an open house in Thompson or Winnipeg.

The third round of the Keyask Public Involvement Program is underway. Open houses are planned for two communities, including the following:

THOMPSON OPEN HOUSE

Thursday, May 16 (4:00-8:00 pm) at the Thompson Regional Community Centre

WINNIPEG OPEN HOUSE

Thursday, May 23 (4:00-8:00 pm) at the Norwood Hotel at 112 Marion Street in Winnipeg

For more information about the Public Involvement Program please contact Manitoba Hydro at (204) 360-3473 or email Keyask@hydro.mb.ca

For more information about the project, please visit:
The Keyask Project website: www.Keyask.com