

Telling Your Story Conference

May 5, 2011

On Thursday May 5, 2011, Community Living Brant and R.E.A.C.H. Out, the Self Advocate Committee collaborated to present a one day conference for self advocates called "Telling Your Story". Self advocates and support staff from as far away as the Niagara region attended the event. The focus of the day was to empower self advocates with the knowledge that telling your own personal story is a vital tool in remembering who we were, who we are and who we want to be. The keynote speaker in the morning was Mr. David Pitonyak who talked about the importance of having people in our lives that know our stories. He also shared several of his own stories with the captive audience. The afternoon was devoted to break out sessions with mini workshops offered about the following story telling techniques: Scrapbooking, Journaling, Brant Tale-tellers and the Power of Storytelling. During the break and lunch periods self advocates were invited to enjoy several excellent displays featuring examples of storytelling at its finest – picture boards, pamphlets, photo albums, photo journaling, story blanket and a very interesting and interactive display about a dream trip to the land down under, Australia. R.E.A.C.H. Out member Kristie Beckham did an excellent job as Master of Ceremonies and President of R.E.A.C.H. Out, Diane Jones, welcomed everyone to the conference and thanked all of our guests at the end of the day. R.E.A.C.H. Out is most grateful to Sakoieta who gave the opening address thanking our Creator for our Earth and all of our blessings and for closing the day with thanks and music. We are also grateful to Doug Doolittle who led the Power of Storytelling sessions and to Barbara Sisson from the Brant Tale-tellers. Not surprising to anyone, Community Living Brant has many talented staff and we would like to acknowledge and thank Ann Smiley who led the Journaling session and Shelley Csordas and Sherri McCaw who led the Scrapbooking session. Finally, we are thankful for help throughout the day from several self advocates and staff: Diana Tomietto, Chloe Zaluski, JoAnne McBurney, Heather Moore, Seneca Henhawk, Kirk Bartosek, Susan Walters, Carrie MacNeil, Nancy Simeon, Julie Turner, Tammy Douglas, Heather Rutter, Tracey Gard, Donna Blackmore along with R.E.A.C.H. Out members Kristie Beckham, Diane Jones, Bruce Jones and Mike Taverner. As the day ended we were most honoured to be presented with a dream catcher by Doug Doolittle. This dream catcher was made especially for Community Living Brant by Doug's wife to thank us for the invitation to Doug to participate in the Telling Your Story Conference. It will be displayed proudly at Head Office allowing only positive thoughts and feelings through and warding off negativity. It was truly a memorable day for all involved and R.E.A.C.H. Out is looking forward to hosting another conference in 2012.

R.E.A.C.H. Out Self-Advocates

