

We returned to the Conference in the evening for a special graduation ceremony for students at the Information Technology at Technowave. Cliff Summers, a First Nations person of Oneida ancestry, asked him to participate. This was partly because the area is traditional Algonquin territory, and partly because he holds the Elder in such high esteem.

William did the opening and closing prayer for the graduation. His opening words were touching: He talked about being very proud of the young people and their achievements; he referred to them as children, boys and girls – these were young adults; one could feel the poignancy: one born almost a century earlier looking down the pathways of time and seeing these young people embarking on a new adventure. I could see the panorama of his life unfold – the canoe on the rivers of life, the bush, the tourists, logging, television, travel, political leadership, spiritual awakening, community activism; William has always been one to embrace all that life offers; his is easily the most brilliant mind I know; with better eye sight, he would definitely have been into computers himself. He could see a new future unfolding for the young people: *I am very proud of them. I wish I were sitting and learning with them. But I did not go to school; I myself am a kindergarten dropout. I only learned to read and write and count when I was an adult. We did not have opportunities like these in my days. I wish them all the best for the future, in their work lives. They will become the strength of the people.*

Mohawk Grand Chief Joe Norton was at the celebration. He took a few moments to reflect on his work with the Elder at a conference to promote conflict resolution in Caux, Switzerland in 1995, organized by Moral Rearmament (now, Initiatives for Change). He had obviously been moved by William's participation in that event. It was good to hear the Mohawk leader acknowledge the Algonquin so warmly. After the centuries of rivalry between the two tribes fanned to their own advantage by the newcomers, the French and English, to the great destruction of the indigenous, it is gratifying to see, this very year three high profile Mohawk chiefs express their love and support of Elder Commanda. Ms. Roberta Jamieson, former Chief of the Six Nations of Grand River Territory, now Chief Executive Officer of the Six Nations of Grand River Territory, was also present.