



Bizaanigo Take One its' **FREE!!!**

INTER-TRIBAL TIMES

'TO ENLIGHTEN, ENRICH, AND ENTERTAIN THE ANISHINAABE OF NORTHWEST ONTARIO.'
Distributed throughout NW Ontario, including all First Nations and all Rural locations

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Six students and a controversial video

By Ronald Wolf
For InterTribal Times

Last month six, non-native, female students from Fort Frances High School posted an extremely conversational video on the Internet's Facebook video website. The video, about two minutes in length showed the students, holding liquor bottles, dancing to the background sounds of a native powwow.

The students at the time of the video where members of the Muskie girls' hockey team were recently kicked off the team and disciplined but would not confirm that the girls were suspended from school a source told the Fort Frances Times.

Couchiching, Manitou Rapids, Nicikousemenecaning, and Stanjikoming First Nations students were pulled from the school for safety reasons.

A Fort Frances Chiefs Secretariat Official Statement graded the girl's video as "disrespect".

"The mockery of one of our most sacred and spiritual events, the powwow, was appalling. It is an action that is beyond reproach. However, we must use this incident as an opportunity to impact positive change; this was our wake up call to the racism that exists in our community. It demands that we as leaders unite our efforts, in concert with all our neighbours in the Rainy River District, to address the problem."

The official statement addresses the students who produced the conversational video.

"To the girls who participated in the video, we cannot express the sorrow and anger we feel as First Nations people. We acknowledge that youth can be guilty of taking action without truly realizing the significance or potential consequences. This however does not absolve you from your wrong-doing. While we welcome your apology as a first step in reconciling your reprehensible actions, we also strongly feel that you need to hear and understand the voice



Photo by Ronald Wolf

Fort Frances representative for the six communities in the area Gary Allen (left) said when someone has wronged us it's up to us on how we react. "You can answer politely or turn and walk away. It's up to you. There's valuable lessons and we have a choice on how we want to handle the information and how we want to move forward in our lives." Jack McMaster is on the left.

Certainly these girls have learned a lot about the power of technology and the Internet, and just how global a village we are in our own little village," McCabe told the Times.

A Feb.21 Rainy River District School Board press release follows: "In response to the incident that occurred last week, the Rainy River District School Board would like to reassure students, parents, and community members that a safe and respectful learning and teaching environment is paramount. The Board is very concerned about the respect and value of all cultures within its system. As a result, the Board has been in touch with the Chief's Secretariat and is working with them to seek a resolution to this situation. Meetings with First Nation students, parents, and community leaders have taken place throughout the week. Fort Frances High School students and staff are continuing to dialogue on ways to provide support and a voice for all students, such as the re-establishment of the Aboriginal

Youth Council. As well, Fort Frances High School, with assistance of the Ontario Provincial Police, Treaty Three Police and community agencies, are working together to provide a safe and supported learning environment for all students.

The Board is committed to working with our Aboriginal partners to move forward to ensure that all students, staff, and stakeholders are respected and valued."


Not everyone thinks the ordeal is running smoothly. According to the Times, Rainy River First Nations Chief Jim Leonard said, "What we are asking is that the board of education admits that we have a problem, instead of calling it an isolated incident. Once the board admits there is a problem with racism, then we can deal with it," Leonard told the Times.

On Feb.19 the six students in question wrote a letter of apology to the Times. The letter was directed to the aboriginal communities. "Three months ago we gathered to celebrate with friends. What happened next is inexcusable, nor is there any explanation possible for our stupidity and foolishness. We took a sacred cultural tradition of the Anishnawbe people and treated it like just another dance move off MTV. There was no planning or intent; we never for a second meant to harm anyone. And in our ignorance, we have disrespected, insulted, and hurt our aboriginal communities, embarrassed ourselves, our teammates, and our families."


Although the original video has been taken off Facebook, Youtube (Facebook's sister video website) is showing a video on what appears to be an apology from one of the girls entitled "Racism" Memories. The video shows stills from the original video set to music and displays these words...

And the fact that there's no video anymore...people could STOP sending physical


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Video

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 threats to me...for a video that was never mine in the first place...It's a little bit funny (actually not really)...just how many people thought resorting to violence and more hate would resolve this. The only thing is peace itself. I'll let this song finish, but after that...turn off your

computer ...and go outside. This video, at three minutes 13 seconds, is longer than the original video. To date the latter video received 995 views.

The OPP said no charges are expected to be laid concerning the video.

The matter of the video is expected to continue.

What was said...

Jack McMaster, director of education, said "I have a lot to learn (about the incident). McMaster apologized when he said the incident as being isolated

cultures are working together to resolve issues of racism.

McMaster stresses that since the he hasn't felt good about losing students and the video.

Fort Frances representative for the six communities in the area Gary Allen said when someone has wronged us it's up to us on how we react.

"You can answer



Jack McMaster

and by that he inadvertently insulated the chiefs.

"What I was trying to say was lets try and move forward together."

McMaster, adding, "Today for me is absolutely huge. I feel inside right now really good" McMaster was referring to the events that was taking place concerning the video and that the two



Chief Gary Allen

politely or turn and walk away. It's up to you. There's valuable lessons and we have a choice on how we want to handle the information and how we want to move forward in our lives."



Wanda Botsford, Constituency officer for Ken Boshcoff local MP, addressed the girls who produced the video by saying, "You didn't cause racism. Racism was here before all of this (video). You gave us a reason to speak about it and that's really why we're here is to provide solutions about the future. It's not the end, it's a starting point."

Inter-Tribal Times

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