

Eskasoni Health Centre  
presents

***National Aboriginal Diabetes Awareness Day***  
***May 7, 2004***

**“Focus on Feet”**

When Annie Denny first heard Dr. Gordon Dow speak in Eel Ground First Nation, she knew she had to get him to Eskasoni. Dow, an infectious disease specialist in Moncton, NB had worked extensively with the Cree First Nation in Manitoba before moving to Moncton where he coordinates an amputation prevention clinic. After the diabetes workshop in Eel Ground, Annie Denny, a CHR in Eskasoni First Nation, had a mission. Three years later saw her efforts and patience pay off when Dr. Dow came to Eskasoni to be the keynote speaker at the National Aboriginal Diabetes Day event, *Focus on Feet*.

The event took place at the Sarah Denny Cultural Centre and was hosted by Peter Stevens of the Eskasoni Health Centre. Over 100 community members and health professionals from around Cape Breton Island watched as Sylvia Denny and Walter Denny began the day with a Sweetgrass ceremony and prayer.

Before Dow began, he explained to the audience the series of events that led him to Eskasoni and that he was actually booked a year in advance for this event. He singled out Annie Denny for her perseverance and he related a story about white water rafting in the Ste. Croix River in New Brunswick with his daughter. Finding an eagle feather unperturbed in the rushing water, he retrieved the feather from the Ste. Croix and presented it to Annie as a token of friendship.

Dr. Dow then presented an interactive talk on diabetes in the Aboriginal population. He explained why diabetes is so prevalent in First Nations and stressed that prevention is key to gaining the upper hand in the fight against diabetes. Diet, exercise, smoking cessation and proper care of feet are all things that people can do to help prevent some of the foot problems that diabetics are faced with. Dow gave hope to all present that these situations are preventable and even manageable in the face of a dismal diagnosis. Yes, feet can be saved.

Dow accented the role of traditional healing and footwear in treatment and encouraged people to maintain the practices that have seen them survive thousands of years.

The afternoon session saw Dr. Deborah Zwicker, endocrinologist with the Cape Breton Regional Hospital give an informative overview of diabetes. Both speakers answered many

questions from the floor. Afterwards, they were presented with stained glass dreamcatchers crafted by Mary Rose Julian of Eskasoni. The day wrapped up with the Eskasoni Dancers performing a series of Native dances for the audience to enjoy.

Special thanks go to the Eskasoni Health Centre staff for helping with the day's events, H.T. Catering for the traditional meal and Chief Blair Francis for all his support.



CHR Annie Denny accepting an eagle feather from Dr. Gordon Dow at the National Aboriginal Diabetes Awareness Day workshop, Focus on Feet, in Eskasoni First Nation.



Dr. Gordon Dow accepting a Dream catcher from Eskasoni dietitian Anita MacKinnon at the National Aboriginal Diabetes Awareness Day workshop Focus in Feet.



Dr. Gordon Dow speaking to the audience at the National Aboriginal Diabetes Awareness Day workshop Focus on Feet in Eskasoni First Nation. About 100 community members and health professional attended the event.