

## Visit highlights Potawatomi past

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By Dennis Sieron

Elizabeth Kahlke of Downers Grove makes a friendship bracelet at the Gallery's Choice Monday. The Blodgett Legacy Partnership, Inc. is supporting Potawatomi history by hosting a beading event run by Susan Campbell. Campbell just published a book of poetry called "Stained Glass Windows: Journey To My Roots."

Although Susan Campbell traveled thousands of miles last week from Kauai, Hawaii, to Downers Grove, she said she felt right at home as she visited the land that once was home to her Potawatomi ancestors.

Campbell, a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, took part in a variety of Potawatomi programs and discussions on Sunday and Monday around the village, which were sponsored by the Blodgett Legacy Partnership.

On Monday Campbell appeared at Highland Grade School in District 58 and St. Mary of Gostyn School dressed in her full Potawatomi regalia. Campbell said she spoke to the students about the history of her ancestors and the Potawatomi Indians who settled in Downers Grove.

"The kids had great questions and were curious," Campbell said. "They wanted to know more."

Monday afternoon Campbell participated in a beading class at downtown Downers Grove business Gallery's Choice. Artist and owner Rose Jarecki taught participants a modified Potawatomi beading technique.

St. Mary's fourth-grade teacher Jennifer Kahlke, who participated in the class, said Campbell spoke to 120 third- and fourth-grade students at the school earlier that day.

Susan Estall, member of the Blodgett Legacy Partnership, said Campbell's visit to the schools was beneficial to the students who are just beginning to learn about the Potawatomi Indians who lived in Downers Grove in the 1800s.

Estall said it's exciting that centuries later the students are given the opportunity to put a face to the stories they read about in class.

"One thing we tried to get across to the kids was an understanding between different cultures," Estall said. "It's nice to know we are influencing children in a positive way."

Through stories passed down through generations, Estall said the Blodgett Legacy Partnership has learned that the Blodgett family, who were also some of the first settlers in Downers Grove, were friends with the Potawatomi Indians. Estall said her group is dedicated to researching and understanding what Downers Grove looked like during that time period.

After Campbell departs this week from Downers Grove, she will join a caravan, which she has participated in since 1993. The caravan makes stops throughout the Midwest to mark where the Potawatomi Indians lived. Although the Potawatomi Indians settled throughout the Midwest, Campbell said she feels especially connected to Downers Grove.

"This is definitely home," Campbell said.