



**Susan M. Hill** is of the Mohawk Nation from Six Nations of the Grand River.

Susan's most recent education, a PhD in Native Studies from Trent University, has made it possible for her to work as a professor at Wilfrid Laurier University in Brantford. Her previous education included an MA from the University at Buffalo (SUNY) and a BA from the University of Michigan. These assisted her in securing professional work and laid the foundation for her doctoral studies.

Her biggest academic accomplishment has been earning the PhD and receiving the Governor General's Gold Medal for Academic Excellence and a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Fellowship for academic honours. She gives credit for these awards to the people who supported her along the way, especially her family and friends who kept her (relatively) sane and safe.

Susan grew up in Michigan and was raised by her father, who was from Six Nations, but was not connected to the community. She knew she was Mohawk and where her father was from, but **did not have the supports of the community and extended family, so identity was an issue** for her. Susan made those connections to Six Nations while going to school and working.

The death of her father delayed Susan's education and she waited before going back for her PhD. This decision gave her a chance to **learn more about her culture and to better understand the "real world"**. While **Susan found it challenging to balance her responsibilities**, the process of returning to the community gave her the **needed strength** to complete her education. Many people from Six Nations and **other Haudenosaunee communities** gave her **encouragement and support** during her education and that had a great impact on her being able to **"navigate through the difficulties of post secondary education"**.

As an Onkwehon:we person the values or principles that guided her the most were the **teachings of the Longhouse** – the **responsibility** to take care of herself and others by **using the gifts the Creator** gave her. She believes that her abilities in terms of education are among the gifts she was given and sees it as her duty to **use these gifts to support her and to contribute positively towards her family and community**.

Susan was reminded every day what her Dad taught her. He always stressed the **importance of working hard** and being independent. As well he supported her interest in making connections and contributing to our community. The **work ethic he instilled in her** undoubtedly inspired her to pursue her education and to do the best she could along the way. Susan hopes that the historical research and writing that she does will contribute towards positive things for Six Nations and the Haudenosaunee as a whole. She hopes that in her teaching and writing that she will help others to **better understand our people and the history** we share with the rest of the world.

She believes the one key challenge that needs to be addressed by Six Nations and/or the world in the next generation is to learn how to **live with each other in peace**. We need to **treat each other with kindness and compassion**. She believes that the **teachings of our ancestors** hold the keys to do this through the **Great Law** and through the lessons of our **Creation Story**. Our **treaty agreements** laid out the relationships that we were to share with other Nations. If we live in accordance with our cultural values – **of treating all life with respect** – and encourage our neighbors to respect the treaties we share with them, we can leave this world in a better state than when we entered.

Susan would like to advise young people how **powerful a tool education really is**. It does not make you any better than anyone

else, but it can **open doors** that you would not be able to pass through without it. Like any other tool, you need to know **how to use it to your advantage** and in a way that won't harm other people. It requires **time and commitment**. Everyone **needs education** – just not all in the **same form**. **Find** the kind that works best for you and give it **your best effort**. Whatever path you select for yourself, remember that you have a **responsibility** to yourself, your family and your community/Nation to do the best you can and to **give back** so others will have similar opportunities.

**Six Nations** is a really **special place** and it is our responsibility to keep it **safe and healthy** for the generations who will follow us. **Value** what we have here and value each other.

Susan would like to thank the board and staff of Grand River Post Secondary Education Office who encouraged her to complete her education and to use it to give back to our community. The financial support from this community allowed her to spend **more time on her academic work** which undoubtedly contributed towards her successes in her doctoral studies.

Nyawen!