

Student established a special place in educators' hearts.

The entire Willis College family extends our deepest sympathies to Helen Cross and her family for the sudden loss of her son, Rahontsiio Cross. We share in their grief as Rahontsiio had established a special place in our hearts.

Rahontsiio was one of the first Joseph T. Norton Scholarship Award recipients. Rahontsiio Cross was a young man with big dreams for his family and community. In his scholarship application, he describes his dreams for Kahnawake and writes why this scholarship opportunity was so important to him, " I want to be the next Bill Gates".

He put his dreams to work, excelled in his studies and immediately became a "model student" for Willis. Rahontsiio quickly adjusted to the college environment, worked closely with his scholarship co-winner Jocelyn Grant, was well liked by his classmates and became known as a bright shining star to the college administration, all in a very short period of time. As testament to that, many staff and students attended a ceremony presented at the Odawa Native Friendship Centre by Elder Paul Skanks.

As humble and shy that Rahontsiio was, He gave a heart-warming thank you speech to a room full of people at the Joseph T. Norton Scholarship Award recipients official welcoming ceremony held at Willis College in Ottawa. In attendance were several national Aboriginal leaders, media, and Rahontsiio's mother, who came from Kahnawake to attend her "baby's" ceremony, as well as students and teachers from Curve Lake First Nation visiting Willis College at the same time.

Afterwards, pictures taken from that ceremony were sent to the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Council of Canada

and were used to create posters and the cover page on the booklet for the national technology Aboriginal training program: TeKnoWave.

Rahontsiio was so proud to see his pictures on it. For Mrs. Cross, who had not seen the TeKnoWave booklet before his death, it represents Rahontsiio's graduation and success. For Willis College and TeKnoWave, we have decided to create the "Rahontsiio Cross Award of Excellence" to be awarded to the highest academic achiever in each TeKnoWave graduating class in order to continue extending one of the rays of Rahontsiio's brightness to Canada's First Nations. Further, Willis College will present to the family a full Diploma with Honours that we know Rahontsiio would have successfully completed.

"On behalf of the entire Willis College family, we thank Mrs. Cross for raising such a fine outstanding young man who in such a short period of time gave us inspiration for a lifetime. His legacy will guide others who will follow the trail laid down by him."