

# History incomplete without Natives

by Tania Brewe and Naomi Szigeti

Canada's nationhood can be enriched by a greater understanding of Native Canadian history, asserted Olive Dickason in a speech to students Tuesday.

"By incorporating the Indian factor into historical context and internalising it, it will give us a much wider and broader texture of ourselves both as an individual, and as a nation."

Dickason, a history professor who specialised in Native history before she was forced to retire last year following a Supreme Court judgement, warned that without knowledge of Native history before the conquest, we will not be able to get the whole picture and understand the Native contribution to modern Canada.

She referred to the Oka crisis in 1990 and related it to the pattern of attitudes set by the Europeans and Natives during the conquest of the Americas. She said the first contact between Europeans and Natives set forth all of the tensions and problems evident today. She went on to say that those first encounters established what is now traditionally based on written documents and that anything before then is considered prehistory. This leaves the thousands of years before written documentation unnoticed, and when looking at people with a tradition of passing history orally, their history is much more difficult to trace.

"If you're going to depend on historical documentation, you've basically got nothing to work with."

Dickason explained five areas used in attempting to uncover this



Rodney Gitzel

## Olive Dickason speaks to students Tuesday on Native Canadian history.

"prehistory": archaeology, geology, linguistics, anthropology, and oral traditions. By compiling all this evidence, the piecing together of America's complete history can begin, Dickason said. Although these five areas are an efficient way of gathering history, they have just recently been introduced. For ex-

ample, Dickason said that up to the 1960s, published history still referred to natives as savages.

Dickason said that although things have improved, Canadian society still has a long way to go.

"Once an attitude is in place it is very difficult to convince people to expand their horizons."