

## **NEW ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM LAUNCHED**

Daniel J. Rowe - February 10, 2017  
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*Former Canadian prime minister Paul Martin was in Kahnawake Tuesday to sign a partnership and establish a new entrepreneurship course at the Adult Education Centre in town. (Daniel J. Rowe, The Eastern Door)*

John Diabo is a trainer Kahnawake CrossFit and wanted to ensure the business could grow to the fullest extent.

He had the dream, but he wanted to gain the practical skills to make it a reality.

The local entrepreneur was looking to improve his business acumen and checked out Concordia University's John Molson School of Business, and considered applying for the program.

He then discovered the newly-launched Aboriginal Youth Entrepreneurship Program (AYEP) for Indigenous Adults, which debuted at the First Nations Regional Adult Education Centre in Kahnawake a month ago.

Diabo spoke to *The Eastern Door* about why he chose the local course.

“First of all just learning about marketing strategies, learning how to get myself out there more, and even the small stuff – the accounting, the numbers – it’s good for me to know that as well,” said Diabo.



*Artist and entrepreneur Martin Loft gave a unique perspective of how to be an artist with an entrepreneurial spirit at the new program at the FNRAEC. (Daniel J. Rowe, The Eastern Door) “Knowing how a business works and filling in the gaps of knowledge that I don’t have already, that’s how I see it.”*

Diabo teaches a class at his gym then scoots to school for class from 9 a.m. to noon, Monday to Friday. He hopes to expand the business, owned by local entrepreneur Derek Stacey, from a gym to a fitness centre for those searching for an all-around healthy-living experience.

The AYEP two-semester course is the result of a partnership with the Martin Family Initiative (MFI), a not-for-profit group run by former Canadian prime minister Paul Martin, that works on improving education for Indigenous people in Canada in partnership with communities across the country.

Martin was in Kahnawake Tuesday for the signing of the partnership, and spoke about his excitement of having an entrepreneurship program designed specifically for and by Indigenous entrepreneurs.

“The thing I would say to you and that gives me such excitement is that, whether it be the Mohawk culture, whether it be the Cree, or the Ojibway, these are incredibly rich cultures of people who did business for literally thousands of years,” said Martin.

“We all know how the history of this country was built on trade, and that we all understand that as well is that the treaties to which this country should adhere were built between longstanding nations who understood how we came together, and that also is the basis of this course.”

Harley Delaronde teaches the class that began January 9 with a week of setting up the class in the former warehouse at the school on Mohawk Trail.

The former KSS teacher had not taught entrepreneurship before, but found little trouble instructing the eager students ready to build businesses in the community.

“I have to say, it’s the students who made it amazing,” said Delaronde. “It’s about them, it’s not about me because they really teach me a lot and each other.”

Tewatohnni’saktha has made no firm decisions on what the commission will do with its entrepreneurship program, which many in the community have taken.



*Instructor Harley Delaronde, former Canadian prime minister Paul Martin and Mohawk Council chief Carl Horn were at the FNRAEC entrepreneurship classroom Tuesday, as the new program continues. (Daniel J. Rowe, The Eastern Door)*

“There have been discussions with the FNRAEC to potentially offer a customized version of their program to our clients, however no decision has been made at this time as we are still in preliminary discussions,” business services and loans assistant Kristy Kennedy said.

Martin feels education and entrepreneurship for Indigenous communities is essential for the country as a whole to succeed. It has been at the heart of his work dating back to his time as Canada's prime minister, which included the 2005 Kelowna Accord that sought to improve education for Indigenous people.

"This country is not going to succeed unless the youngest and the fastest growing segment, who are the First Nations, succeed," said Martin.

"This is an important lesson for you, but it's a far more important lesson for Canadians of all kinds to understand that we share this land, and that in sharing this land, the fact is that we've got to work together and we've got to understand each other."

For Diabo, being an entrepreneur means always working to improve the business, and the self.

"It's easy to have a dream," said Diabo. "I'm very thankful for where I am now, but I don't settle on the knowledge that I have now.

"I always want to get myself to know more, whether it be the way that I teach, the techniques that I use for the coaching and training, and then on the business side, how can I get more people to come in? How can I put myself out there, and how can I be professional about it?"

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