

## UWO CONVOCATION

# Not all business graduates fit the pin-stripe stereotype

Sharon Stevenson fought to maintain her native identity and Rob Gray battled cancer while pursuing degrees at Western.

By Lisa Blackburn  
*The London Free Press*

Most people associate business students with pin-stripes, BMWs and the fast lane. But at least two students at Monday's convocation ceremony for honors business administration students at UWO refute the stereotype.

Sharon Stevenson stands out even in a convocation crowd full of black robes and hoods. At least from the ankles down. She was the only student wearing moccasins.

Stevenson, 28, is a member of the Pequis Indian band from just outside Winnipeg. For her, life at the Western was a culture shock.

**SCARY MOVE:** Pequis is the largest reserve in Manitoba with about 3,000 people. And although Stevenson was used to cities — she already had a BA from the University of Manitoba — she found the move to Ontario a little scary.

"I didn't know anybody here."

The moccasins are an effort to assert her roots, something that wasn't always easy at Western.

"There's no native student association here, unlike almost every other university I've been to or visited. At first they sent me to the International Students Association, but I didn't feel welcome."

Stevenson says what kept her going was support and encouragement from her family.

"My dad was a woodcutter and fisherman, seasonal work, so he really encouraged all of us (Stevenson is the seventh of nine children) to either go to school or find jobs. My first degree was for my dad, this second one is for me."



Rob Gray found the strength to play football while being treated for cancer. Sharon Stevenson coped with culture shock by keeping in touch with her roots on a reserve in Manitoba.

Eventually, she hopes to help the Pequis reserve set up its own financial institution.

**LIFE STRUGGLE:** Rob Gray is only 22, but has already fought one of the hardest battles life can offer. In January, 1990, Gray was diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease, a cancer of the lymph nodes.

Although in the last stages of the disease at time of diagnosis, Gray graduated on schedule and even played football with the Mustangs while undergoing radiation treatments.

Gray says he never doubted he would recover. "My goal was to never let the cancer affect my everyday life. I think that helped me get well, because if I had stopped school, stopped football, I might have just sank into a pool of self-pity."

Gray is in remission now and starts a job with Knowlton Realty in Toronto in July.

Western's 256th convocation continues today with graduates from the faculty of social sciences and Huron College.