

Algonquins come together to celebrate culture

By Tina Peplinskie, OBSERVER MULTIMEDIA JOURNALIST
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An event a year in the making became a reality Saturday as the Algonquins of Ontario came together to celebrate their culture and heritage at Pembroke's Riverside Park.

This mark's the fourth year for the Nation Gathering, previously held in Golden Lake, Mattawa and Sharbot Lake. Each year the gathering has grown in interest and popularity as it provided an opportunity to celebrate Algonquin art, culture and heritage while building on the Algonquin believe we are all connected. Various artisans had their wares on display and for sale throughout the

park.

The event included a grand entry with representation from the Algonquins of Greater Golden Lake First Nation and Bonnechere Algonquin First Nation as chiefs Patrick Glassford and Richard Zohr served as co-hosts for the cultural gathering. Other communities taking part in the grand entry travelled from Mattawa/North Bay, Sharbot Lake, Ottawa, Bancroft and Whitney. Between 50 and 70 Algonquins took part in the grand entry.

Chief Zohr of the Bonnechere Algonquin First Nation was overwhelmed with the initial response to the Nation Gathering as the large event tent was filled with not only Algonquin people, but members of the public and youth from the Children's International Summer Village who are staying at the Marguerite Centre in Pembroke for the opening remarks following the grand entry.

"This provides a chance for the community members to come together and live the culture," Chief Zohr said. "Some people are trying to find the culture, which is why we hold these kinds of events."

The events of Saturday started with a sacred sunrise pipe and drumming ceremony, which was attended by Pembroke Mayor Ed Jacyno, who was honoured and humbled to be part of such a moving ceremony.

"It was moving to see grandfather sun create the ribbon of red along the Ottawa River, the river the Algonquins have used to fish and travel on for generations," he said addressing those gathered for the opening ceremony.

"This shows just how small we are in the scope of things, but that we are all connected as people," Mayor Jacyno added.

After the official opening, the chiefs, representatives of the various nations and special guests, including Mayor Jacyno danced to traditional honour and welcome songs played by drummers Maashkaa Waanniimutti, which translates into Big Wind.

The afternoon included traditional drumming by a number of mens' and womens' groups including the Shadow Drummers from Mattawa, the Kichi Sibi Drummers and Sisters of the Drum as well as traditional Algonquin dancers from Nova Scotia and Ottawa who attended the gathering.

The Nation Gathering culminated with a sit down dinner at the Pembroke Memorial Centre followed by the main event which continued into the evening.

Chief Zohr and Chief Glassford both thanked the committee behind the planning of the event as well as the officials from the city of Pembroke who helped with many aspects of preparation for the gathering.

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