



Nujignua'tegeg



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AFN National Chief in Listuguj



Listuguj received a special guest during the Powwow weekend. Perry Bellegarde, the Assembly of First Nations National Chief, came to the community for the first time and delivered a vibrant speech at the Powwow.

“I got a really nice invitation from Chief Darcy to be with him and his community,” he said. “I’ve never been to Listuguj before. So when I saw him at our last AFN AGA in Niagara Falls two or three weeks back I said, ‘Hey let’s make it happen.’”

His visit started with a breakfast at the Community Center (Bingo Hall) where LMG Councillors, Directors, Gespeg Chief Manon Jeannotte, as well two members of Parliament from the region, Hon. Remi Masse and Rene Arsenault, Campbellton Mayor Stephanie Anglehart-Paulin and N.B. Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat, Patrick France were all in attendance.

There were several presentations during the breakfast. Councillor Lloyd Nicholas, Alcon, Officer Trapper Metallic and Chief of Police Peter Arsenault from the Listuguj Police Department spoke on the difficulties that the department has been experiencing due to a lack of funding and the tiring amount of hours each officer endures.

There was also an announcement of a 100,000\$ funding grant from

Aboriginal Language Initiative Program from Heritage Canada to help with revitalizing the Mi’gmaq Language in Listuguj. This support will help the different efforts of the community to create awareness on the Mi’gmaq language situation, provide classes, stimulate the use and transfer the knowledge of the language to the non-speakers.

After the meeting, the dignitaries went to the Powwow grounds for the Grand Entry where Chief Bellegarde wore his tradition Plains Cree headdress. The National Chief, elected in December 2014, is from Little Black Bear, Saskatchewan.

The morning started off with a blue sky bursting through what little clouds we had, a beautiful day to Powwow. After the Grand entry National Chief Bellegarde spoke about the importance to preserving identity despite the centuries of oppression and struggles for First Nations. ‘We are alive’ he told the crowd that applauded him. He took the time to thank Lita Isaac and the Powwow volunteers, dancers, drummers for their efforts to bring people together every year.

After the morning’s events finished, Mr. Bellegarde gave an interview on camera to Nujignua’tegeg (see our Youtube channel) before leaving to Eel River Bar for a Sweat Lodge ceremony.



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Echoes of the Powwow



The whole weekend runs on volunteers. Whether it's in the weeks and months leading up to it, or those filling all the small, but demanding jobs. Everything from making coffee to directing traffic needs someone giving up their time.

"The Powwow belongs to the community," said Isaac. "When people step up and offer to help ... it might be something small, but it all counts."

Laura Arsenault has been involved with the Powwow for seven years. She's now one of the coordinators. "It's just something for me that I would donate all my time to — even if it was yearlong, I'd still do it," she said. "I'm passionate about. It's the only thing I really volunteer for."

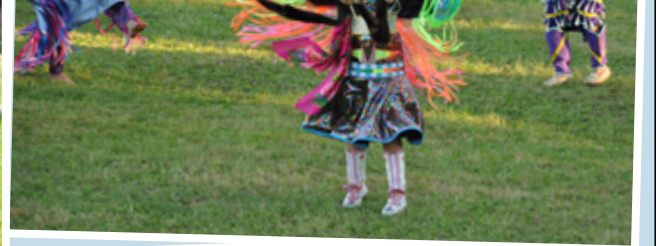
While she spent this year mostly occupied with the vendors, Arsenault's favorite job is working the canteen. She gets to meet new people and catch old friends visiting home.

A lot of people plan their vacations

around the Powwow, and new people discover it every year.

This year, over 500 people were fed moose, salmon and fiddleheads on Saturday alone. Isaac says being able to feed everyone is their way of thanking those who come and support Listuguj, and the Powwow.

"It's building up the pride," said Isaac. "If somebody leaves the Powwow with a feeling of experiencing a ceremony at the sacred fire, or just praying at the sacred fire, or enjoying the drumming and dancing. Or going to the native crafts and buying something made by somebody from a New Brunswick First, or Quebec, or Listuguj — it's wonderful ... Or just enjoying an indian taco. Leaving with something in their bellies or their heart or soul, it's the best feeling for us. That's our aim."



Vilma Almendra, Nasa Nation, Colombia

It's nice to feel that with the dances and the presence of the Grand-Father-the-Fire, you are still honoring the spirituality of Indigenous people here. AFN Chief Perry Bellegarde said: "despite colonization they couldn't kill us and we are still here, alive". These strong words, speaks about the ongoing death and life struggle that Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island are facing for many centuries."



Garland Joe Augustine, Elsipogtog, Mi'gmaqi

At the first Powwow there were few regalia, few eagle feathers and now we see more drums, more dancers, more children at the Powwow. This mean that people are coming back to their culture and it makes me proud. I come here every year since the first Powwow and they treat us good. I always want to come back."



Rene Arsenault, Member of Parliament, Restigouche East--Madawaska Riding

This is my first powwow and it's nice to sees Natives, Acadians, French and English to meet at the beat of the drums. This is a family gathering. I feel like the Earth vibrates when I see a community that chants, dances and respect Mother Earth."



Lloyd Augustine, Eskinuopitijk, Mi'gmaqi

I see more dancers, it's very well organized and there is a good atmosphere. They welcome everybody here and I come every year."



Jamie Metallic, Listuguj, Mi'gmaqi

This was my first time dancing with my regalia and in my home community. The support of friends and family was overwhelming and makes me feel proud. Looking at them was like looking at a rainbow with all their colors and they were around the circle. This is a new road for me, physical and spiritual."

Watching over the community



How are you tonight?” Constable Jacob Renouf asks at a roadblock set up by the Listuguj Police Department (LPD) in front of the Education Complex. It’s near 10:00 PM on Aug. 5 — the start of the Powwow weekend. Six officers are working, instead of the usual two.

Flares, and the flashing lights notify oncoming traffic. Constable Renouf greets drivers, and explains what they’re doing – just making sure everyone is being safe. The officers quickly shine flashlights in the car, and everything is in order. A few more jokes are made, everyone laughs, and the car continues on.

“How are you tonight,” Constable Renouf asks the next car. The officers work their way through the line of vehicles that has formed, and then they pack it up. They’ll set up another road block later, but for now they’ll patrol.

Constable Renouf expects to drive the same streets dozens of times throughout his 11-hour shift. He has only been in the community

for nearly a year. But he was on duty this time last year. He worked for the Gesgapegiag Police Department, which provided extra help in the past. No other police departments were needed this year. And the Powwow continues to grow.



Sgt. Detective Trapper Metallic has been with the LPD for over 15 years. He grew up here, got a summer job with the LPD, and got his training in Regina at the RCMP Academy, Depot Division.

There were a couple years in his career, around Powwow time, when he would see an influx in incidents. “Then we started to put some more guys on patrol, and start making it a regular thing annually. Then those stats start to go down.”

Police Chief, Peter Arsenault said that the incidents this year were “almost garden variety.” “Everything went well,” he said.

While some may see operations like a road block as a nuisance, Arsenault hopes they recognize the true purpose. “I’d like to think that they’re aware that we have their best interest in mind,” he said. “Everyone is entitled to safety.”

Like most of the officers on duty, Sgt. Detective Metallic is also working extra hours, after his regular four-day schedule, through the night. “To work extra hours is nothing,” he said. “It comes with the territory. Whether you’re 15, 20, 30, 40 – however many years of service you have – you come and work the extra hour, just to make sure that nothing happens. It’s priceless.”

Many aspects to Wellness



The 23rd annual Wellness Fair kicked off in the usual way, with a march from Subway to the Powwow grounds at 8 AM. As always, the Wellness Fair was a family event, equipped with an inflatable playground, and breaks for games, like a fair-wide “rock, paper, scissors” tournament. Organizer called it one of the best attended Wellness Fairs in recent years.

“One Wellness Fair is never the same as a previous one,” said Sheila Swasson. Haven House hosts the event.

This year, many aspects of physical and mental wellness were addressed, but it had a clear focus on language. Many presenters in the morning spoke entirely in Mi’gmaq. Others spoke partially in Mi’gmaq.

“If we don’t start working toward revitalizing our language, within 30 years, there will be no Mi’gmaq speakers in Listuguj,” said Swasson.

Lorna Sook, Listuguj Education Director, told the crowd about the struggles of the Listuguj Education Directorate in finding a way to address the threats facing the language.

Sook eventually attended a conference at Mount Allison University, where she heard that the only way to save a language is through immersion programs. And immersion programs will only work if they are complete. “I came back with that message, frightened,” said Sook. “Having to make a decision on relocating the Mi’gmaq Immersion Program out of the Gitpu School, and it will be located in a section the Education Complex.”

The Immersion classes will be isolated, in an attempt to reduce the tendency to switch back to English. After a certain point, people will only

be allowed to speak Mi’gmaq.

Like every year, the Wellness Fair had many presenters under the big tent, and lots of gifts to give away. Presenters spoke on a variety of topics related to all aspects of “wellness.” Denny Isaac, of the GMRC spoke about the importance of water. Dr. Fred Metallic was able to keep with the Mi’gmaq language theme, while also giving a first-hand account of how preventing violence can apply to different levels. He told the story — partially in English, and partially in Mi’gmaq — of his doctoral thesis, and the battle to write it in Mi’gmaq, and defend it in Mi’gmaqi.

He referenced a banner “Family violence is not a Mi’gmaq way of life” carried in the march earlier that day. “Well neither is institutional violence a Mi’gmaq way of life,” he said. “To insist that indigenous students only speak English or French is a form of violence.”