

# Celebrating the birth of Canada at Wendake's Pow Wow

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It was a weekend full of celebrations in Wendake with the 52nd edition of the Huron-Wendat Nation's International Pow Wow and the inauguration of the new permanent roof over the outdoor amphitheatre.

There were many dignitaries present at the official opening of the Pow Wow on Friday June 30, including Liberal MP Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of family, children and social development.

Duclos praised the richness of the Huron-Wendat culture and thanked the leadership of the Huron-Wendat Nation adding "There is no more important relationship than that with our indigenous peoples." He then elaborated on the recent work that has been completed on the amphitheatre. "There has been \$1,500,000 invested into this very important project of improving the outdoor theatre. There is now a permanent roof, the stage is being upgraded and housing is being created for the artists," thus allowing artists from far and wide to perform and attend events in Wendake.

Liberal MNA for Chauveau Véronique Tremblay pointed out, "Pow Wow brings aborigi-

nal cultures together. This is an opportunity for everybody to see aboriginal cultures, try their gastronomy and sample fresh game meat."

Huron-Wendat Grand Chef Konrad Sioui said, "This is an international event where everybody is welcome. We all have a place around the circle. There are no differences between us or any class system." Taking into account the weather forecast for the weekend, he wryly added, "If it rains, we will be able to go inside our wonderful, covered stadium!"

With that, the dignitaries gathered in front of the amphitheatre where Duclos cut the red ribbon.

Sadly, well-known Blues musician, Gilles Sioui, 60, who was supposed to inaugurate and perform on the stage of the covered theatre on Saturday night, died suddenly on Friday, June 30. The well-known Blues musician was an ambassador for the Huron-Wendat nation. There was an extra special ceremony added to Sunday's Pow Wow in memory of him.

There were 45 artisans with \$15,000 worth of prizes up for grabs for the competitors who partook in the traditional dances on Saturday and Sunday. General admission to the International Pow Wow was



Photo by Juanita Craig

**Richard Dumont played the traditional flute at the opening ceremony, telling spectators to think of a place or someone that they would love to bring love to the event.**

less expensive than in previous years; a three-day pass cost \$15 for those 13 and over. A shuttle service from downtown Quebec to Wendake proved an efficient way to avoid traffic and parking problems over the busy weekend.

Free samples of game and specialty meats were offered with fascinating explanations of the animals that were used. There were also free activities

for children including high ropes and a flying fox.

During the press conference before the opening ceremony, Grand Chef Sioui affirmed, "Today we celebrate Canada. It is our Canada. The name itself comes from here [a St. Lawrence Iroquoian word, *kanata* meaning "village" or "settlement"]. We were the ones to name this country. This place, in particular Wendake,



Photo by Juanita Craig

**Federal minister Jean-Yves Duclos and Grand Chief Konrad Sioui join together during the Blanket Dance with the Sandokwa group.**

is a place for everybody. We appreciate the support and financial aid of \$13,000 we have received from Canadian Heritage. I have never known a prime minister who is as involved or who takes care of aboriginal people like we have now. It's not just about words, it is through actions too. He is walking the talk."

As explained by the Master of Ceremonies Charles Bander to spectators at the Pow Wow, "Sometimes we will ask you not to take photos because at times, it is best not to have a

filter between yourself and what is happening around you. We want you to see with your eyes, hear with your ears and feel what you are experiencing so that you can share it with others, just like our oral traditions."

Being able to witness Canadian aboriginal cultures in full regalia, dancing to the heartbeat of Mother Earth through the drums is one thing, but to dance *with* them during the inter-tribal dances is not to be missed.