

Hessel powwow, a great event for community



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We held our 21st annual summer powwow in Hessel this past week. As always it was beautiful weather and so many family and friends came to gather. It takes many hours to prepare, coordinate and get ready for our celebration. Our Housing Department guys came down and remodeled our lodge for better access for our elders, they did fantastic work. Miigwech to our Hessel Elders Committee for heading this proj-

ect up and feeding our visitors throughout the weekend. Our Powwow Committee and community members come together to plan, clean grounds, gather medicines, shop, cook and make sure all is done in a good way for us and our traditions.

This year our Hessel community drum, Mukwa Giizek, hosted and, once again, gave us amazing sounds, I smile with true pride every time I hear them. They are the pride of our community. We had other drums with us this year and they brought out some powerful music and celebration: Sturgeon Bay, Tic Bush, Bawating, Blackbear and Agwa Gumi from Batchuwana, Chief Dean Sayers and Tony Grondin. The dancers and families we had made it so special. It was so nice that the Birons all came home to be here and enjoy our families.

I walked through the grounds both mornings of the powwow and the feelings had been unexplainable. At sunrise people were in the lodge talking at open ceremonies, our precious elder

women were preparing our feasts and that brings such a safe feeling to me; miigwech, Dorothy, Midge and aunt Linda, I love you guys. We had many old friends come to celebrate, too. Our elder Roy Dutcher danced and was in full regalia, these are the ways and it means so much to us that they carry on our ways for us and gather in our community. Miigwech, Roy, you'll always be so close to my heart as my elder. My aunties were there, showing pride and keeping up as heads of our family, aunt Margeret, aunt Catherine and aunt Ann. They have had many heartaches in life; just a couple days of them enjoying their family and celebrating our traditions is one reason we gather in this way. My cousin Perry and his beautiful family and granddaughters are always there dancing for our people, they started dancing when they were little tiny girls and now beam with pride. My godfather/uncle Jim stayed by the arena the whole time and listened and relaxed.

We lose people throughout the

year and it's painful to not have them around, but times like these bring out good feelings, feelings of healing and peace. Many of us have lost loved ones in the past year, that's so tough, especially when the void can never be filled in this life. We reminisce and feel close to them when we have fires, drums and prayer. Bobbie, Mel and Val, you being there made us feel close to uncle Ray and aunt Loreen. Tad, thanks for stopping in to visit the evening before too, made me think of the old ones who used to drive around in big ol' cars, checking out the happenings, kind words that made me smile.

We gather and celebrate to carry on our ways, to remind us that we are strong, unique Anishinaabe and throughout my time at the powwow, I danced for my uncles who have passed on and truly loved our Hessel powwow, for my elders who can't, our veterans, our communities and for preservation of our ways.

Walking around watching quietly always shows me the true

meaning of our ways.

Miigwech to my own beautiful daughter and granddaughters for celebrating our ways, too. Alanna and Ava were the littlest dancers and I will always cherish this weekend. Miigwech to my parents, John and Janice, for teaching me to appreciate our family and our ways. I hope all who attended walked away feeling the special memories that I did. Last but not least, chi miigwech Adrienne and Graz Shipman, your ceremony and presence with us keeps me going and the love you show for people and the communities is unconditional.

I'm writing all this because I wanted to share with you my personal experience as an Anishinaabe kwe, the feelings and pride in who we are, our gatherings are sacred and powerful and for that I'm thankful.

Baamaapii,

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