

New Beginnings powwow celebrates 22,000th birthday?



By Jake Courtepatte

Though Canada may be celebrating its official 150th birthday this year, there are others who are celebrating a much more longstanding anniversary.

Aaron Bell, the owner and operator of White Pine Dancers, has worked with the Town of Aurora for the past five years in bringing First Nations culture to the community, through events like the Canada Day celebrations and Arctic Adventure on Family Day.

Shelley Ware, Aurora's Special Events Coordinator, had been looking to implement a full day of activities dedicated to the celebration of our country's native peoples, and worked with Bell to organize the Town's first ever official powwow.

"First Nations people have been here much, much longer than 150 years," said Bell. "We're celebrating our 22,000th birthday."

The White Pine Dancers, based out of Brantford, ON, travel Southern Ontario to spread the word of First Nations culture through song, dance, and storytelling.

With grants from the Canada 150 celebration, as well as from the Town of Aurora, they worked to gather vendors, drummers, and singers at Lambert Willson Park to celebrate what Bell called "an opportunity to open discussions about the First Nations people both internally and externally."

"Aboriginal tourism is one of the main contributors to the tourism economy in Canada," said Bell. "Events like these bring in a lot of outside tourism, and can really make a difference in sharing cultures and bringing cultures together."

Dubbed "New Beginnings," the title derives from a desire to create a new understanding of Aboriginal history among the outlying community.

"First Nations culture is so deep and so rich," said Bell. "But it's not only about teaching others about the culture, it's about mutual respect between cultures."

The event arrived just one day after a \$20,000 grant was announced by Newmarket-Aurora MP Kyle Peterson in the House of Commons, to be used to host a series of events in Aurora titled "Canada 150 Celebration - Aurora Style", of which the powwow was the kick-off event.

"I am proud to see our government invest in our community as we celebrate Canada's 150th Anniversary of Confederation," said Peterson. "I am proud our community will join together this weekend for the first New Beginnings Pow-Wow in Aurora providing an opportunity to learn, understand and celebrate one another."

Aurora Mayor Geoff Dawe said he was "truly grateful" to the Government of Canada for the funding of the event.

"This event helps our community to celebrate Canada's Indigenous people, and the many diverse cultures, traditions, and languages that make Canada a wonderful place to call home."

Bell said the White Pine Dancers hope to work with the Town to make the powwow an annual event.

"Right now, we're just concentrating on this one since it's the first one, but we would love to bring it back year after year to the

Town of Aurora.?