

Local event returns to Orangeville for National Indigenous Peoples Day

By **Sam Odrowski**

National Indigenous Peoples Day is being marked locally with a special in-person celebration after being on pause due to the pandemic.

The event is being held June 25 from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m. at the Alder Street Recreation Centre Playing Fields and will feature a variety of drummers, dancers and performers on stage.

At the Mino Kamik Medicine Wheel Garden there will be tours and teachings from Community Elder Karen Vandenberg, while the Orangeville Public Library will be doing storytelling with Indigenous books for kids.

"Karen will take people on a tour of the garden and educate them on the four directions, what they mean, and their importance in the Indigenous community," said Debbie Egerton, chair of the Dufferin County Cultural Resource Circle (DCCRC), the organization holding the event.

"We also have another elder who will be teaching about each of the regalia that the dancers wear, so you'll get a bit of history and a bit of understanding of what each of the regalia really mean. It's a beautiful teaching," she added.

Everyone is welcome to attend the local event for National Indigenous Peoples Day. It is the first one being held in-person since 2019, while a virtual event was held in 2021.

The event is family friendly and a new addition this year is inflatable bouncy castles for kids.

For music, the event will feature the Eagleheart Drummers and Singers, led by respected elder and cultural leader, Jimmy Dick. Other bands and singers include Mama D, Rene Meshake and Larry Kurtz.

Egerton told the Citizen she hopes attendees of this year's celebration learn about Indigenous culture, traditions and some of the issues impacting First Nation's communities.

"When I started this, my whole concept was building a bridge," said Egerton of the DCCRC's creation in 2014. "I wanted to bridge all the racism, all the negativity, and bring the two sides that can agree together so that it builds a stronger foundation."

"One if we can get through to one person, then I have done what I'm supposed to," she added.

Egerton said in the past for National Indigenous Peoples Day, the event saw 200 to 300 attendees but she's hoping it will be even bigger this year.

At the event there will be an opportunity to join the Moose Hide Campaign, which is a grassroots movement of Indigenous and non-Indigenous men and boys who are taking a stand against violence towards women and children. Those who sign the Moose Hide Campaign pledge, signify that they are committed to honouring and respecting, the women and children in their life and will work with other men and boys to end violence against women and children.

Individuals that make this commitment receive a small square moose hide pin that represents their support for the movement.

Egerton said she'll have an iPad at the National Indigenous Peoples Day event that attendees can sign the pledge on.

Those who would like to sign the pledge now or donate to the not-for-profit campaign can visit: moosehidecampaign.ca

Egerton said she'd encourage everyone to come out to the Alder Recreation Centre for the event on June 25 and learn something new.

"Come and explore, take an opportunity to see what the culture brings,?" she enthused. "I think the most important thing is break the bias. Come see for yourself, stop letting people tell you what people are like. If we do that our whole lives, we could miss out on some amazing people, if we listen to the bias of others.?"