

Sharing the Celebration: my first PowWow by Amy Barnes



Native dancers participate in the PowWow.

On my first day as a co-op student with Arts Services, I found myself attending my first PowWow. On Sunday, September 27, Culture Division partnered with the Anishnawbe Homes, Gabriel Dumont Non-Profit Homes, the East Scarborough Boys' and Girls' Club and other community partners to host a First Nations PowWow. The event was dedicated to honouring youth and inspiring them to embrace their native heritage and develop an appreciation for the environment. Held at Galloway Park in Scarborough, the event offered traditional drumming, food and dancing. This is important for the native culture as so many of their customs are told through stories, dance and regalia.

The day started with a 6:30 a.m. Sunrise Ceremony. This is a sacred event where the Creator is honoured with welcoming gifts of mother earth and blessing grandfather sun as he rises over the horizon. The main event began at noon with the customary Grand Entry procession. Traditional drummers and enthusiasts dressed in time-

honoured clothing mingled with a crowd of 500. All were honoured and enjoyed their part in the PowWow as they welcomed the Fall Solstice.

It was an honour to attend this ceremony. Everyone left the PowWow with a gift. I received a tobacco pouch, which represents one of the four medicines. The other medicines are cedar, sage and sweetgrass. This souvenir of tobacco is given to those that do well or to act as a token to be submitted into the fire to thank the Creator. I met new friends and learned new traditions. Now I know that everyone can be more generous and this observation grounded me.

Editor's note: Amy Barnes is the Arts Project Assistant with Culture Division's Art Services unit.