

Powwow celebrates, educates about Native Americans



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Bob Moody leads other dancers in the circle arena. / Trace Christenson/The Enquirer

FULTON — A large [familyz](#) near the village of Athens celebrated the weekend with music, dancing and food as several hundred strangers watched.

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The traditional Native American Powwow on Friday, Saturday and Sunday has been held by the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of Potawatomi for more than two decades.

“It is mostly about getting the Indian families together to celebrate and dance,” said Homer Mandoka, tribal chairman. “And the traditional powwow is used to educate people about how our ancestors lived their lifestyle.”

The powwow attracted Native Americans from as far away as Canada and New Mexico, he said, and several hundred spectators, both Indian and non-Indian.

Social events began Friday including a parade and basketball tournament.

More than 30 vendors had booths featuring products from the United States and most produced by or for Native Americans, and raffle drawings and a Sunday car show were part of the event.

“It is a day we say thanks for the opportunity to come together in this place and in this circle,” Bob Moody of Gobles said in his invocation before the Saturday afternoon Grand Entry at the Pine Creek Reservation at 2221 1/2-Mile Road in Fulton and just northwest of Athens.

“This is a place where family has walked and we thank you creator for giving us our existence.”

He told participants and the people watching to look for positives “because we never know if we will walk on this earth tomorrow.”

The entry was to honor elders and military veterans and led by Dale Anderson, a former Marine.

Different dances were held during the afternoon, including a blanket dance to raise money for a military veteran and several inter-tribal dances, which were open to anyone, including non Native Americans.

Kenny Prescher and Mary Jackson of Lansing participated in the dance.

Prescher works at FireKeepers Casino, owned by the tribe, and has attended powwows before but Saturday was a first for Jackson.

Both were impressed with the tributes to veterans and Jackson was enthused about a chance to dance.

“She said if its allowed, I want to,” he said.

Mandoka said the powwow is a chance to reinforce traditions for members of the tribe and to educate the public about Native American culture, including the dances, music, colors, medicines.

“Education is a big component so they can pass traditions along to other generations,” he said.

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Gradus Tenbrink, 75, of Montague, was walking outside the arena with his wife Carol.

“I usually come to everything,” he said. “I am a member of the tribe and am enjoying the culture and meeting the people who are [members](#). It is always nice to see them here.”

Others were attending their first.

Andy Barrant, 39, of Quincy came with his son, mother-in-law and wife’s sister.

“It is interesting,” he said. “I am here with my family for the first time and the dancing end is neat to watch.”